

# AFRICAN STUDIES

(Formerly Bantu Studies)

VOLUME 10. No. 1 — MARCH 1951

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## THE HUNTING SONGS OF THE AMBO

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### SYNOPSIS

*These thirty-two songs are translated and analysed from the literary point of view. The first part of the paper treats the background of the songs, i.e. the hunting customs and relevant beliefs. The second part gives the actual songs with the English translation and a short commentary after each as to the vocabulary and the theme of the song. The third part gives general appreciation of the poetry in the songs, the poetical technique and themes. The striking feature of the technique is parallelism reminiscent of the parallelism of the Hebrew psalms.*

### INTRODUCTION

THE AMBO may be classed as a subtribe of the Lala who some two hundred years ago conquered the Lukusashi valley (Mkushi-Petauke districts of N. Rhodesia) and the adjoining parts of the Lunsemfwa and Lwangwa valleys, having ousted the Nsenga and having adopted the agricultural systems suitable to the valleys which might have been of the local population. They are matrilineal and at the beginning the marriage is matrilineal. They developed slight linguistic characteristics and have separate tribal consciousness but the common sentiment with the parent stock still survives especially among the ruling Nyendwa clan which holds sway over the Lala and Swaka as well.

This collection comprises the bulk of the Ambo hunting songs called *cinsengwe*. The authors are unknown, nobody composes new songs but only these traditional songs are sung. They are sung at the ordinary beer parties, at hunting feasts, at the sacrificial beer for the successful hunt or when the hunter being unlucky and discouraged sings them alone or with others

at night before the hunt. A hunter may also dance, at hunting festivals, with a gun, horns, animal skull or a tail, to the accompaniment of these songs. Such dance is also called *cinsengwe*.

The songs are sung in antiphony and largely recitando, the rhythm playing a major part and the melody being of minor consequence. For accompaniment axe-blades struck against the stones are used (*mikonykobelo*), gourd drums (*malimba*) and rattles made of basket-bag filled with pebbles (*cişekele*).

There is no doubt that in the traditional Ambo life the hunter is surrounded with a halo of romance and heroworship. The Ambo prays to the spirits only for three things, for food (meaning corn), health and "the red thing" (*buswete*). Grain and health have nothing romantic in themselves but the hunting has it. Again the trapping (*busonso*) which is routine everyday drudgery is not considered as hunting (*bupalu*) but shooting is. The elephant hunter (*nykombalume*), now belonging to the past, stands still higher. The glory of the hunting profession is linked up

with the shortage of, and craving after, meat for which there is a special term: *inkasya*.

A man who killed a human being, a lion or a leopard, had to be specially doctored in order not to become mad. He would come before the chief, and dance to the accompaniment of the drum. The chief would give him a red feather

of the lory as a mark of valour. But the hunting songs are silent on this point.

The killing of a hyena is hushed up for the hyenas are called "the cattle of the witches" (*nyombe syamfwiti*) and the vengeance of the witches is feared.

## HUNTING CUSTOMS

The gun is an heirloom of the matriliney (*cuma cacikoto*). It is usually inherited according to the matrilineal inheritance rules, passing through the real and then classificatory brothers, and then to the sisters' sons. It was worth a slave. However it happens sometimes that a father gives a gun to his son and enforces his will with his brothers.

A woman, the representative of the matriliney, on the day of the inheritance, hands the gun to the heir, saying: "You have been given, this is your gun. Guard it as the owner guarded it, use it as your guardian had used it." (*Niwe mwapelwa, imfuti iyi yobe, musunge fyenkefyo waisungile mwine, uisebenserye fyenkefyo waisebensensye mboswa.*) Then she spills some flour on the heir's head.

The hunter having received the gun is initiated into the profession through being doctored. Then he frequents the places where he is likely to meet the game. When setting out the hunter says a prayer to the spirit of the relative from whom he inherited the gun or to his father, if his father was a great hunter: "Light up my eyes that I may see well where I am going." (*Muntufie kumenso nyakbone bwino uko ndokuya.*) In this way that spirit becomes the hunting guardian of the hunter.

Sometimes a few hunters combine, take meal in goatskin bags and go far in the bush. They put up a shelter of branches and make expeditions, each in a different direction in order not to shoot one another.

The game is cut, smoked and carried home. The meat is distributed among the villagers. The sides are taken by those who carry the meat,

and one hind leg is given to the headman. The chest and the forelegs are divided among the village. The head and the heart go to the hunter himself, the back goes to the wife of the hunter, the hind part of the back goes to the mother-in-law. The neck goes to the man who accompanied the hunter, the other hind leg may be given to another section of the village.

Before such group hunt two kinds of sacrifices are made, a private and a communal one. Each hunter makes a sacrifice to his hunting guardian spirit. He spills some flour at his bed head and places there a string of white beads, saying the same prayer as when he goes to hunt on his own. If he receives no adverse sign during sleep and the offerings are found intact in the morning, he joins the expedition for his spirit approves of his undertaking.

Formerly these sacrifices were made at the pole of trophies (*cinsanda*). A three-forked pole was driven into the ground in front of the hunter's hut. A calabash with hunting medicines was put between the forks. The pole was adorned with horns and heads of the killed animals. The trophy tails are kept in the hut. At the hunting festivals the hunter or his friends may take a head or the horns, dance with it and sing the hunting songs. Now the trophy pole is rare.

Before a communal hunting expedition a communal sacrifice is made. Three or four elders go to a big tree where the offerings are usually made, they scrape the ground and if not in a hurry they put up a miniature spirit's hut. The

<sup>1</sup> Brother and sister are used in this article for real or classificatory.



offering is made to the spirit of a most famous local hunter, usually of the headman's clan. The headman sitting with bent knees spills flour in the spirit's hut, or if there is none, on the ground, saying: "If it is you who lie in this bush, we have come to seek relish." (*Kani nimwembani mwalele mulino-mpanga twaisa mukufwaya bucisa.*) He may prostrate himself to the right and left and all present clap hands. The remaining flour is made into gruel and eaten on the spot. The ceremony is performed in the evening. Next day the hunters come and see if the flour is intact. If it is so the omen for the hunt is propitious, the offering has been received.

When a hunter has killed some four animals he prepares a hunting feast. He invites his friends and his special "funeral friends". He had dried the meat of the heads and legs on a three-foot long stick (*musomo*). The meat is boiled and given with porridge to the guests. After the meal the party signs the hunting songs in the manner described above. The women do not take part.

When a hunter kills a big male animal like eland, buffalo, hippo, rhinoceros and elephant (the last one male and female) he doctors the animal and his gun. It is believed that these animals have revengeful spirits which cause bad luck in hunting especially interfering with the gun.

If a hunter fails to kill game repeatedly, he goes to consult the diviner. The diviner may find that some of the dead clan relatives or the hunter's guardian spirit (his name-sake) or the hunter's dead father asks for a beer sacrifice. If some clan relative has died recently unhappily, then, without divination, beer is brewed to placate him.

Sometimes it is found out at the divination that the grumbling of the living is the cause of bad luck. The mother-in-law has repeatedly received gifts of meat, but did not repay it with white calico, so that the clan of the hunter grumbles against it. The grandmother of the hunter is sent to approach the mother-in-law, who apologizes and gives the calico. Sometimes the sister of the hunter grumbles that she has received too little meat.

But for the spirit beer is brewed. When the hunter comes home from the diviner, his mother or sister throws flour on the trigger saying: "If it is you, So-and-so, show us, please, the red thing." (*Kani nimwebo, Bacite, mutulangisye mutupele buswete.*)

Grain is soaked for beer. The hunter throws the first handful of grain into the pot of water saying: "This is the beer we soak, show us if it is you that has become angry. Give us the red thing." (*Bwalwa mbu, tukosabika, mutubwenesye kani nimwebo mukalipile, mutupele buswete.*) The women funeral friends give a shrill sound.

The hunter goes now to hunt every day. The meat from the head of the animal is smoked and kept to be eaten on the day of sacrificial beer. In the evening of the beer party many guests come invited. The singing of the hunting and other songs begins with instruments as described. In the early morning the hunter goes out again to hunt. When he comes back about 8 a.m. one beer pot is brought to his hut for the sacrifice. His clansmen and funeral friends gather. He takes some beer from the pot in the drinking gourd and pours it on the ground saying: "This is the beer we give you that we may eat meat." (*Bwalwa mbu twamupela tulyepo nama.*) All present clap hands. The women give a joyous shrill sound. The song is then started: "*Te, te*, I implored you, my spirit", (*Te, te, natetela wemisimu yanji*), repeated many times.

Then another song is sung:

*Namukansukaula,*

*Ndi kasembe,*

*Ndimulamatile.*

I have driven you away,

I am a tsetse fly,

I had clung to you.

The song refers to the attachment of the children to the father who is a hunter. The beer party lasts the whole day.

\* \* \*

## THE SONGS

1. *Cibinda mwalaswa*

*Ne ceende-ende mulitemenwe;*

*Tange mbangule munga—*

*Ne ceende-ende mulitemenwe.*

Hunter, you are pierced,

But you're fond of roving;<sup>1</sup>

Wait, I'll take out the thorn—

But you're fond of roving.<sup>1</sup>

*Cibinda*: hunter. It is more honorific. The most common is *mupalu*, Cf. song 32.

Perseverance of hunters in spite of hardships is extolled. In this case continuous roving in the bush and piercing oneself with thorns is sung.

2. *Cibinda 'bangule munga,*

*Cibinda 'bangule munga,*

*Ne yaswe, ne ceene-ende*

*Mulitemenwe mukafwa kumunya,*

*Caya m'maunya,*

*Caya m'maunya—nkombalume.*

Let the hunter take out the thorn,

Let the hunter take out the thorn,

Then cursing and roving.

You love it, you will die of the thorn.

Off he went to the veld,

Off he went to the veld, the great hunter.

*Cibinda 'bangule*: elision of *a* = *abangule*.

*Yaswe*: an exclamation, a curse.

*Caya*: class *ci* used about persons as an expression of great respect. Cf. *Cileme cafwa* = the chief is dead (literally: the heavy thing is dead).

*Maunya*: poetical for *mpanga* = bush.

*Nkombalume*: used nowadays about more successful hunters.

A similar song glorifies the grim tenacity of the Ambo hunter.

3. *Nsaba, nsaba, nsaba,*

*Abule asabanje,*

*Abule asabanje mwine.*

<sup>1</sup> Rather: "I the roamer whom you love." [Ed.]

Chop it, chop it, chop it,

Do take it and chop it;

Do take it and chop it yourself.

*Kusabanja*: poetical for *kusakanta*, to cut meat with an axe. From *nsaba*, ideophone of cutting meat.

Joyous and triumphal sentiments of hunters burst out in song in sight of the kill being cut up. During the hunters' feast it is an inspiring reminiscence.

4. *Cipisya leta bwato,*

*MwaiPAYA nkombalume ?*

*Cipisya leta bwato,*

*Cipisya leta bwato,*

*MwaiPAYA nkombalume ?*

Chipishya, bring the boat,

Have you killed it, hunter?

Chipishya bring the boat,

Chipishya bring the boat,

Have you killed it, hunter?

*Cipisya*: a name.

A joyous moment in the hunt is commemorated, the calling for a canoe after a hippo has been killed. A true-to-life conversation is rendered in this song.

5. *Twilimune bayinga,*

*Imisimu iyende cungulo,*

*Wemisimu waBatata,*

*Silupinika micila yanombe*

*Batata kabanina mabinda.*

Let us make offerings, hunters,

The spirits may they roam in the evening,

You, the spirit of my father,

You who cut the tails from the cattle,

My father has fed the veld.

*Kuilimuna*: poetical, to implore spirits by remembering them in the offerings. Common: *kupapatila mipasi* or *kupupwila*.

*Bayinga*: poetical (may be of foreign, Lamba (?))



origin),<sup>1</sup> hunter. For other words used for "hunter", cf. songs 1, 2, 7, 8, 9, 10, 26, 28, 32.

*Imisimu*: poetical, of foreign (Nsenga) origin, Common: *mupasi*. *Wemisimu waBatata*: irregular syntax. Should be: *Mwemisimu yaBatata*. It may be explained that *imisimu* is majestic plural only, really it is singular. *We-* is singular and *wa-* agrees with *we-* and not with *imisimu*. *Mabinda*: poetical for common *mpanga*, bush. *Silupinika*: he who cuts off (the tails). An ornamental, Homeric epithet.

*Dombe*: here metaphorically = cattle, for game.

This song refers to the bad luck in hunting and retrieving the quarry caused by the angry spirit of the father. Reference is also made to the evening sacrifice. The spirit of the father makes the game escape though wounded. It dies in the bush and thus the bush is fed with its meat and only the spirit of the father cuts off the tails as trophies. Cf. Introductory section.

6. *Tange tuposepo bunga*  
*Kani cakusumina.*  
*Cibolele ali nebakwabo,*  
*Kasumba-banyama.*  
*Pano lomba alisyele eyka,*  
*Kasumba-micila.*  
 Lo, we shall throw the meal,  
 If he will agree.  
 Chibolele has a brother,  
 The pursuer of game.  
 But now he's left alone,  
 The pursuer of tails.

*Kusumba*: poetical, to chase.

*Banyama*: foreign (Lenje) word used in poetry for the common *nama*, game, meat.

*Kasumba-banyama*, *kasumba-micila*: Homeric epithets, ornamental repetition. *Micila*: tails, a part for the whole, meaning the game.

*Cakusumina*: class *ci-* referring to the spirit as a sign of respect. Cf. song 2, *Caya*.

The meaning has been explained in the introductory section. The hunter spills flour in the evening to see if the spirit of his brother will

accept it, leaving it intact. The hunter gives credit to the hunting exploits of his brother. The spirit of the dead brother seems to be his hunting guardian for whom he spills flour.

7. *Bacibinda mwalala,*  
*Bukeni mwebayinga,*  
*Weulele ungauce,*  
*Twimbe cibonga,*  
*Twilimune, misimu yabwela*  
 Hunters, you have slept,  
 Rise up ye hunters,  
 You who lie till dawn,  
 Let us sing with affection,  
 Let us make offerings, the spirits have come.

*Cibonga*: poetical, common: *nkumbu* = mercy, affection.

This song sounds like a reveille of hunters. It describes the getting up of the hunters and probably it is an allusion to the morning sacrifice on the day of beer. Cf. The introductory section.

8. *Bacibinda mwalala ee . . .*  
*Mubule lwimbo,*  
*Ino-nama ntwale.*  
 Hunters you have slept,  
 Start ye a song,  
 I'll fetch this meat.

A song recalling the hunters' joyous morning after a successful hunt the previous day. The hunters wake up and sing cheerfully the hunting songs. Then they set out home with the kill.

9. *Mumpanga kuwama,*  
*Fwebana-cibinda,*  
*Kandele pamabula,*  
*Kansiete ykanda yanama.*  
 It's fine in the veld,  
 Me, the hunter's son,  
 I slept on leaves,  
 I chewed the skin of game.

*Fwe*: literally, we.

<sup>1</sup> *Umuyinga* is "a hunter" in Lamba. [Ed.]

*Dkanda*: poetical, from Nsenga. In Ambo *nkanda* is never used of animal skin.

Another song dealing with the hunter's life in the bush on a hunting trip. The hunter is proud of being a son of a hunter and of following in the footsteps of his father. The life in the bush attracts the hunters. They stay in the bush a few days in shelters made of branches, sleeping on leaves and not on a mat as at home. Wild pig, zebra, porcupine and warthog are cut up without being skinned and the hide is chewed with the meat.

10. *Nali naBatala*

*Wakomena mubila.*

*Tata waca, . . .*

*Ndekuibaluka nkombalume.*

*Balokulila nye . . .*

*Nemuntu mbule ndile,*

*Nenalikwabanya nama.*

I had a father,

The wailing is great.

Father, it's dawn . . .

I remember the great hunter.

They are bursting into tears . . .

I, a poor fellow, I shall wail,

I, who had been dividing the meat.

*Kukomena*: poetical, from foreign (Lenje) language, to grow, 'to be big. Common: *kukula*.

*Kuibaluka*: poetical, from foreign (Lenje) language instead of common: *kufunga*, to remember.

*Mbule ndile*: Literally "let me take, let me cry"<sup>1</sup>

This song and the songs, 5, 9, 10, 11, 12 may contribute to the understanding of relations between the father and the son as opposed to the relations between the sister's son and his maternal uncle, among the Ambo and the related tribes of the Bemba group who are strictly matrilineal. In most cases the hunters inherit their guns from maternal uncles and grand-uncles and brothers, but this relation is largely of a legal nature. Through the man is, legally, more closely

related to the maternal uncle, he has more emotional attachment for his father, unless his father died in the son's early youth or left him through divorce, and the boy was reared by a mother's brother. Thus the emotional attachment of the son to his father originates through lifelong conversation. The son admires the exploits and enjoys the results of his father's hunts. The matrilineal system is reflected in song 6.

11. *Mfuti yanji ilokunykola,*

*Mfuti yanji ilokunykola,*

*Lunali naBatata,*

*Napenga Siliyolomona.*

*Nkabone mumikondo.*

How fine is my gun,

How fine is my gun,

Ah, when my father was alive.

I mourn for Siliyolomona,

But I must see the tracks.

*Kukonykola*: poetical, common: *kuwama*, to be fine, nice.

*Siliyolomona*: father's name.

*Lunali naBatata*: literally "when I was with my father".

*Mfuti yanji ilokunykola*: literally "My gun is fine."

The hunter sets out. He is delighted with his fine gun. But his thoughts go back to the past when his father was alive, also a great hunter. He remembers his father with grief. But he awakes to the present; he will see the same tracks if the spoors are fresh.

12. *Kana kalila:*

*Nakuya naBatata mukubamba.*

*Syala mboswa,*

*Kubwinji bwamanyika tulokuya.*

A little child has cried:

I'll go with you, father, to cover the pits.

Stay at home, my name-sake,

We're going to many a stream.

<sup>1</sup> The author has here misread *mbule* for *mbule*. *Buula* means "take"; but *bula* means "omit"; and the

translation of *mbule ndile* is "am I to omit to cry?" i.e. "How am I to avoid crying?" [Ed.]



*Kubamba*: to cover game pits.

*Mboswa*: the name-sake and the guardian spirit. Although the father is alive, the guardian spirit of the father is commemorated by the name of the son: hence the father and the son share the same name (and the same guardian spirit). *Kubwinji bwamanyika*: unusual phrase, found only in poetry. The literal translation would be "to the lot of streams"; common expression would be *kunyika sinji*, "to many streams". The streams have their names, thus being landmarks in the bush.

. Here we see the beginnings of intimacy between the father and the son. When a boy is old enough, he accompanies his father in journeys or hunting expeditions, perhaps carrying meal. In this song the son thinks that his father goes somewhere near to set the game pits, and wants to accompany him. The father replies that he goes for a long hunting trip for which the son is considered too young.

13. *Ino-mpanga twalemenamo;*  
*Tamuli fimfule,*  
*Tamuli fimfule, mwebo,*  
*Tamuli fimfule fyenama.*  
 We are tired of this bush;  
 There are no shadows in it,  
 There are no shadows in it, mind you,  
 There are no shadows of game.

The hard luck of the hunter finds expression in this song. He is disappointed.

14. *Ngala yanji yalubile m'maunga.*  
*Yabe nama.*  
 My feather is lost in the veld,  
 May it change into game.

*Ngala*: the feather. A feather is attached to the back of the arrow. Here the arrow is meant (part for the whole).

*Maunga*: poetical, common: *mpanga*, bush.

A detail from the hunter's life is sung about the lost arrow. Therefore the song dates back to the times of bows and arrows.

15. *Nsimba yanji yaluba,*  
*Nsimba yanji yaluba,*  
*Nsimba yanji yangala*  
*Kubanyama.*  
 My genet is lost,  
 My genet is lost.  
 My genet is gone  
 To chase the game.

*Nsimba*: a genet. This is a metaphor for the genet skin. The hunters when going into the bush dress with genet skins hanging round the waist. In case of rain one skin is taken of and the gun is covered with it. Here a detail from hunting is sung, the losing of such a skin.

*Kuyangala*: poetical (probably from Bemba), common: *kusala*, to play. Literally: my genet is gone to play with the game.

16. *Nsensele mwaya banyama,*  
*Nsensele mwaya banyama,*  
*Cani caya musolobela.*  
 Hurry, there went the game,  
 Hurry, there went the game,  
 The grass is trodden.

*Musolobela*: other version, *caya mupolela*, poetical, used of trodden grass.

We see the hunter in action. He follows with a quick step the escaping game, looking for the trodden grass to guide him.

17. *Mfyomfyonte cibondo canama,*  
*Kusanga musyalele;*  
*Yenka mikondo yabanyama,*  
*Banyama catelemuna,*  
*Baya kale.*  
 I shall taste the mark of the game,  
 When I find them where they lie.  
 Abundant is the spoor of game,  
 But the game has slipped away—  
 It is gone.

The hunter full of hopes missed the game which just escaped him.

18. *Nafwa kũlu kuwawa,*  
*Banyama bali kuno kwenda.*  
 Heavens, my legs are sore,  
 The game was here.

*Nafwa*: literally "I am dead"; also as an exclamation of pain.

*Kuwawa*: poetical, from *Nsenga*. *Ambo*: *ku-finya*, to pain.

*Bali kuno kwenda*: in ordinary speech, *bali kwenda kuno*.

The hardships of hunting are sung here again. The tired legs and the missed game are recalled.

19. *Cifuti cibolele camalambo,*  
*Cibone nama, cabola.*  
 The big gun got stuck,  
 When it saw the game, it fired not.

*Kubola*: to rot, also said about a gun not firing when the trigger is pulled.

*Malambo*: the state of a gun being stuck, from *kulamba* the same meaning as *kubola*. *Malambo* means also spot where game was killed. Cf. song 27.

The painful and disappointing incident of a gun beng stuck is recalled. The reason for a gun being stuck is attributed to the spirit of the slain big male which interferes with the gun. (Cf. the introductory notes.) This song suggests that reason. Thus the more probable meaning of the first line is: "The (big) gun got stuck because of the kill." That the second meaning of *malambo* should be applied, is confirmed by the significant detail: "When it saw the game, it fired not."

20. *Kamukoyka muygulube,*  
*Nane ykoykemo mpelembe.*  
*Kamukoyka muygulube,*  
*Nane ykoykemo mpelembe.*  
*Cinama camasejgo ciliweme mukuya muku-*  
*londa.*  
 Follow ye the wild pig,  
 I'll follow the hartbeeste.  
 Follow ye the wild pig,

I'll follow the hartbeeste.

It's good to chase the big game with horns.

Last verse: *cinama camasejgo* . . . literally, "The big game with horns is good to follow."  
 The rivalry among hunters is obvious here.

21. *Ayo makwesebele,*  
*Kani nibani cakuwila?*  
 That giant elephant,  
 Whom will he knock down? (*bis*)

*Makwesebele*: honorific name for an old, big elephant.

The dangers of elephant hunting of old are sung here. Thus the song seems to have come down from old times.

22. *Cilipintile misuka yampande,*  
*Masyula-myejge.*  
 He carried away the tusks,  
 The uprooter of *mwejge* trees.

*Cilipintile*: class *ci-* (Cf. song 6, line 2; song 2, lines 5, 6.) Also to mark its huge size. The same *ci-* class is used in the preceding song 21: *cakuwila*.

*Masyula-myejge*: literally, he who pulls out *mwejge* trees; a Homeric epithet.

A regret is expressed that a chance of acquiring ivory has been lost. The theme reflects bygone days as now the elephant hunt is virtually a lost art owing to the existing laws.

23. *Kalume Simutejga-nama,*  
*Kalume Simutejga-nama,*  
*'So 'bone mf'yantala,*  
*Tayampusya muculu,*  
*Yampulawila mabula ee. . .*  
 You slave, the beggar of meat,  
 You slave, the beggar of meat,  
 Come and see how it hurt me,  
 How it drove me onto the ant-hill,  
 How it broke <sup>1</sup> the leaves.

<sup>1</sup> Lit. broke for me. [Ed.]



*Simutenya-nama*: Homeric epithet from *kutenya*, to beg more meat when given some already.

'So 'bone: abbreviation for *isa ubone*, come that you may see.

*Mf'yantala*: *mfi yantala* (*i* elided). *kutala*, to do something to somebody. *Bwakwa bwantala* beer has made me dizzy.

A buffalo, a sable antelope and an elephant will attack hunters. Here a hunter calls his hunting companion to see the place of his battle, where he had taken refuge on an ant-hill before an enraged beast.

24. *Mwebakasi, mpelela buya,*  
*Mailo ndi nelwendo*  
*Kuya kumatanga abanyama;*  
*Teti mbebele, nalema.*  
*Kamwimba bwino,*  
*Nakuwa mumbulu.*  
 My wife, grind meal,  
 Tomorrow I shall journey,  
 To reach the game herds,  
 I shall not return until I tire  
 Sing ye cheerfully,  
 I am a wild dog.

*Nakuwa*: from *kukuwa*, literally, to bark like a dog.

The hunter asks his wife to prepare meal for him to carry to the shelter in the bush, where he will stay for a few days. The hunter compares himself to a wild dog, as tireless in chasing the game as that animal.

25. *Bamafyala batota nama kutubula,*  
*Tayge n'ite milimo.*  
*Kutobele nsima kuliweme.*  
 My mother-in-law talks of game,  
 Wait, I must finish my work,  
 Relish is good with porridge.

*Kutubula*: to frequent some place, about game.

The hunter cannot forget the all-powerful mother-in-law. She gives him the initiative. But there are more important jobs to be done. The

porridge comes first before meat. He must first think about his garden and millet and afterwards, in his free time, he may hunt.

26. *Cafwatafwata*  
*Cinongo cipika bayinga.*  
*Cafwatafwata*  
*Cinongo cipika bayinga.*  
*Cafwatila itela,*  
*Nebo mailo nkepaye sibili.*  
 It's boiling and boiling,  
 The hunters are cooking in a big pot.  
 It's boiling and boiling,  
 The hunters are cooking in a big pot.  
 Truly it's boiling hard,  
 I'll kill two head to-morrow.

*Itela*: poetical, indeed.

The joy of boiling meat is extolled. But the hunters are exceedingly jealous of their more successful companions. So the hunter hopes for better success tomorrow.

27. *Mujaya, woyo, mujaya—*  
*Wasike lambo.*  
*Mujaya, that mujaya,*  
 It has finished the work.

*Kusike lambo*: *kusika* means, to bury. *Lambo* is the spot where the game was killed. (Cf. song 19.) *Kusika lambo* means, to finish with the kill. Metaphorically it is used about finishing the last pot of beer and the break-up of the beer party. *Mujaya*, a bird, is chosen here only for the rhythm.

The picture in the mind of the Ambo is this: the hunters have finished with the kill and have left the spot. *Mujaya* came and cried. When it cries it is full and satiated. It is in the same condition as the hunters. Thus it gives the finishing touch to the successful hunt.

28. *Mwana alokulila cibi canombe.*  
*Newiso cililobe,*

*Nembwa yanama,*  
*Lunali cibinda,*  
*Lunali kwangala kunjombe.*  
*Nsilangwa micila.*

The child cries for the liver.  
 I, your father, am finished,  
 I, the dog of the game,  
 When I was a hunter,  
 When I played with the cattle.  
 I do not see the tails.

*Nombe*: cattle, here metaphorically for buffaloes.

*Cibucayombe*: lit. the liver of cattle.

*Kwangala*: Cf. song 15.

*Cililobe*: class *ci*: Cf. song 22, line 1; *kuloba*, literally, to vanish.

*Nsilangwa micila*: literally, "I am not shown the tails."

This song expresses the past glories of an old hunter, unable to hunt any more. His skill has vanished, he does not see any more the tails of fleeing game.

29. *Nafwa mutima kubamba,*  
*Pakusanga silimakene.*  
*Nafwa mutima kubamba*  
*Pakusanga silimakene,*  
*Pakusanga silimakene nama.*  
 Heavens, my heart is throbbing,  
 While I see them standing.  
 Heavens, my heart is throbbing,  
 While I see them standing,  
 While I see the game standing.

*Nafwa*: Cf. song 18. Here it denotes surprise.

The song expresses the thrill of a hunter in face of game. Note the elaborate repetitions when the word "game", *nama*, is at last uttered as if with awe.

30. *Kutwali mailo*  
*Walee mpa, cuygwe. (bis)*  
 Where we were yesterday,  
 There he lies, see the vulture. (*bis*)

The wheeling vulture tells the tale of the hunter's success.

31. *Kwa simulela macilikacilika*  
*Kwa simulela ee . . .*  
*Wasulamina pamatenga,*  
*Kwa simulela ee . . .*  
 The eagle is wheeling above,  
 The eagle in the air . . .  
 It pounced upon the deep.  
 The eagle in the air . . .

*Simulela*: poetical, common *nykwasi*, the fish eagle.

*Macilikacilika*: ideophone of a hovering bird of pray.

*Wasulamina*: poetical, to pounce upon.

*Matenga*: plural from *tenga*, Nsenga word for Ambo *cisiba*, pool.

*Kwa-simulela (masilikacilika)*: literally, "With the eagle" (there is beating of wings).

It is said to be a Nsenga song about hunting hippo.

32. *Senseleni, senseleni,*  
*Kano kanika kalele*  
*Basimwenda cingulo . . .*  
*Mwebace,*  
*Mwasya mubyenu mungole.*  
*Walala enka,*  
*Mupalu walowa nama.*  
 Make haste, make haste,  
 At this stream he slept,  
 Simwenda slept in the even . . .  
 You youngsters,  
 You left your comrade in the bush.  
 He slept alone,  
 The wizard of game.

*Dgole*: poetical, for the common, *mpanga* the bush.

*Kalele*: Unusual concord agreeing with *kanika* instead with *Simwenda*.

*Mupalu walowa nama*: other version, *umukali kalowa nama*, a fierce man bewitched the game.

A party of hunters is looking for their more renowned companion who follows a quarry.

★ ★ ★



*Poetical Figures*

The hunting songs in the present paper are treated from the literary point of view only as the works of Bantu poetry. It is evident from the foregoing annotations that there is an attempt at poetical figures. The adorning epithets of Homeric type are numerous. Refer to song 5: the cutter of tails; song 6: the pursuer of game, the pursuer of tails; song 22: the uprooter of *myenge*; song 23: the beggar of meat.

The most striking form of song composition is a construction reminiscent of the parallelism of Hebrew psalms. There are wide differences between an Ambo song and a psalm, for obviously the Ambo song does not flow in parallel, harmonized, symetric phrases; nevertheless almost identical forms with the psalms are met.

*Hebrew introverted parallelism:* The thought veers from the main theme and returns thereto. Psalm 62: 2-7:

Only in God be still my soul,  
From Him is my life;  
Only He is my rock, my salvation,  
My fortress I totter not.  
How long will ye set upon a man  
Will ye dash upon him all of you?  
Only to thrust me from my height they plan  
As from a toppling wall.  
They love the lie; they bless with the lips  
And in their hearts they curse.  
Only in God be still my soul,  
From him is my life;  
Only He is my rock, my salvation,  
My fortress I totter not.

With these lines cf. song 1 where the thought again returns to: "But you're fond of roving." Also song 4. where the former thought returns to: "Have you killed it hunter?"

*Hebrew stair-like parallelism:* The thought is repeated in pretty much the same words and developed still further: Psalm 12 : 7-8:

Jahweh shall guard thee from all evil,  
Jahweh shall guard thy soul,  
Jahweh shall guard thy coming and thy going

From now for ever more.  
Cf. song 15.

*Hebrew synonymous parallelism:* The thought is repeated even in the same words. Psalm 93: 3:

Up have the rivers lifted, Jahweh,  
Up have the rivers lifted their voices,  
Up the rivers lift their breakers.

Some Ambo songs use much the same technique of stair-like or synonymous parallelism or combining both forms. But this technique takes peculiar form in the Ambo poetry. After preparatory repetitions the main idea is brought out in climax. There is even a certain element of surprise in bringing out suddenly the main idea in the short song. Cf. song 2:

Off he went to the veld,  
Off he went to the veld, the great hunter.

song 15: My genet is lost  
My genet is lost,  
My genet is gone to chase the game.<sup>1</sup>

song 13: There are no shadows in it,  
There are no shadows in it, mind you;  
There are no shadows of game.

Refer also to song 29 where the idea of game is brought to climax. Therefore it may be asserted that the Ambo poetry resorts to the use of an aspect of parallelism not found in its exact form in the Hebrew poetry and which may be termed as (synonymo-) climatic parallelism. The same tendency to strike the main idea at the end of the song is noticed in songs 6, 22, 32, though without the use of parallelism.

*The Subjects*

This is lyrical poetry. There are no long descriptions of events, but a short recalling of events

<sup>1</sup> This song, though it falls in with the general pattern of the Ambo climatic parallelism, is in typical Hebrew stairlike parallelism.

of rather sentimental value, always very realistic. The subjects dealt with in the songs are as follows:

The hardships of the hunter; the piercing of thorns (songs 1); the pain in the legs (song 18); the dangers of the hunter from enraged beasts (songs 21, 23); the hardship of the bush, (songs 32, 32.)

The hard luck of the hunter is alluded to in songs 5, 13, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20.

The triumph and the thrill of a successful kill, sometimes mingled with jealousy, is the theme of song 3; the cutting of meat (song 4); the hauling of a hippo (song 8); the carrying of meat (song 26); the boiling of meat (song 27); the end of dividing meat (song 30).

Family feelings, especially the attachment between father and son, finds expression in the songs; pride of being a son of a hunter (song 9); the sorrow for the passed father (song 10, 11); attachment of the father to his child (song 12, 28); the importance of the all-powerful mother-in-law in this matrilineal tribe is fully stressed in song 25.

Religious feelings of the hunter also find place in the song. The offerings to the spirit of the father are mentioned in song 5; to the spirit of the brother (song 6); general offering to a spirit (song 7); the gun being stuck due to an animal spirit (song 19).

### *The Rythm*

Though the present writer is not qualified to analyze the rythm of the songs, for it is organically bound with the music, nevertheless it is felt it will be of interest to indicate tentatively a few characteristics of the rhythm. It is evident that the repetitions aim at the maintenance of the uniform rythm. The rythm seems to be produced

not unlike that in European poetry. The stressed syllables are separated one from another with a uniform number of unstressed syllables. In actual rendering of the song which resembles recitando the rythm is essential. The following examples show the sequence of the stressed and unstressed syllables.

#### Song 13 :

*I-no-mpa-nga twa-le-me-na-mo*

— — — — —

*Ta-mu-li fi-mfu-le,*

— — — — —

*Ta-mu-li fi-mfu-le, mwe-bo,*

— — — — —

*Ta-mu-li fi-mfu-le fye-na-ma.*

— — — — —

#### Song 7:

*Ba-ci-bi-nda mwa-la-la,*

— — — — —

*We-u-le-le u-nga-u-ce,*

— — — — —

*Tw-mbe ci-bo-ngo.*

— — — — —

*Tw-li-mu-ne,*

— — — — —

*Mi-si-mv ya-bwe-la.*

— — — — —

### *The Language*

Though the present paper does not deal with the songs from the linguistic point of view, the poetical vocabulary used in the song is brought out. There is noticeable endeavour to use another, more fascinating vocabulary, in the songs than that used in everyday speech. Many words may be easily traced as being borrowed for this purpose from other languages but many may be archaic.



# SOME NOTES ON THE INFLUENCE OF RELIGION ON ECONOMICS IN A TIKAR SUBTRIBE, WEST-AFRICA

AGATHE SCHMIDT

## SYNOPSIS

*The author is interested in the relation which exists between the cultural main-factors: religion; economics, social organization and starts with some information on what has been done in this connection, then restricts herself to her own investigations of 1938 and 1939 on the Nsei, in the Bamenda Province of the British Cameroons still living under old traditional conditions.*

*The economics of this tribe are mostly self-supporting. Money is only earned to lobola wives, as many as possible in order to fulfil best the demands of their ancestral religion by producing many descendants. From the European point of view a wife yields no interest as none of the products of her labour is used to increase the wealth of the family or for a higher standard of living. This earning of money only for lobolo purposes effects a special rhythm in the labour of men. Several stages are distinguished showing that their manual labour not being directly connected with their family life decreases already in the prime of their life. Then the labour rhythm for each individual is religiously shaped as also are their economical institutions.*

*As farming is done by women their number regulates the amount of land allotted to a family. In fact, quite a number of fields remain untilled as no fields are cultivated for economic purposes. When the cleaning of the fields or harvesting has to be done men drop all their craft work, trade, etc., for it is their main-interest to insure enough food for their families. As descendants are the centre and aim in the life of both sexes, men and women have an equal share of labour and responsibility.*

*These conclusions are supported by exact observations given in the form of tables including a survey of men's occupations in crafts, trade, etc.; a description of trade and its profit; of goods transported to the coast and profits of sale (examples); weekly occupations and the profit on labour in crafts (examples).*

*These tables show what little interest the men have in crafts and in trade. A special example shows to what extent farming is done by, and allotted to, a typical polygynous family. Tables are given on: the type; amount; profits of crops grown; on house-building (expense of labour, feasts); on division of labour between the sexes.*

*An additional note is given on the relation of religion and sociology as well as on sociology and economics.*

At the start I would like to quote Willoughby:<sup>1</sup> "Bantu life is essentially religious. The relation of the individual to the family, the clan and the tribe—politics, ethics, law, war status, social amenities, festivals—all that is good and much that is bad in Bantu life is grounded in Bantu religion. Religion so pervades the life of the people that it regulates their doings and governs their leisure to an extent that is hard for Europeans to imagine. Materialistic influences from Europe are playing upon Africa at a thousand points and may break up Bantu life; but the Bantu are hardly likely to be secularized, for they will never be content without religion, that is able to touch every phase of life and to interpret the divine in terms of humanity." These words cover exactly the mentality I found among the natives of Nsei<sup>2</sup> a Tikar-subtribe. It is on these grounds that I became particularly interested in religion, when, during my fieldwork in 1938 and 1939, I made a special study of markets as well as a study of the natives' attitude to work and occupations.<sup>3</sup> From these researches I discuss here the connexion between economics and ancestor cult. As both differ but little from the general culture of other West-African tribes my researches are typical.

\* I am much indebted to Miss H. von Gernet for her help in the translation into English of this Article.

<sup>1</sup> WILLOUGHBY, W. C., *The Soul of the Bantu*, (New-York: 1928) p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> The Nsei, who are so called Semi-Bantu live in one large village which consists of 13 subvillages, situated in a moist savanna area. They number about 3,000 people and are an agricultural tribe, the tilling of the soil being the exclusive domain of the women. They are of mixed culture ruled by an immigrant Tikar stock. Owing to the lack of information on the areas here concerned Baumann (BAUMANN, THURNWALD, WESTERMANN, *Völkerkunde von Afrika*, Essen: 1940, p. 75) was unable to give any precise characteristics of the Cameroons Province as he does with other areas. He merely states that it forms the transition zone between the Central Sudanic Province and the Eastern Atlantic Province. My observations fit in with what he characterizes as the latter namely: "Overlying a hyalaic, old Nigritic culture is a strong layer of old Mediterranean and Young Sudanic culture. So far as religion and social organization are concerned the Nsei culture inclines to-wards the old Nigritic, whereas for the chieftainship and the administration of the village the Young Sudanic culture is to the fore. Such conditions are usually observed where an immigrant group has settled among local tribesmen." In the

The influence of religion on economics is only one side of the relation which exist between the three important cultural factors: religion, economics and social organization. Anthropologists are not agreed as to the extent to which these single aspects influence or shape the pattern of a given culture. Hence I restrict myself to the religious-economical aspect. Also the unsettled question of priority of one of these factors cannot be discussed here. This latter problem depends much on the outlook of the author. If stress is placed on the material side of culture, then economics takes the first place. In this way Schebesta<sup>4</sup> points out the very important influence which economics have on social structure. On the other hand, the late Professor Spann—sociologist, philosopher and also well versed in the structure of primitive cultures—was convinced, even in his last days, that religion shapes every subject of every culture.<sup>5</sup>

I contend that, at least in Nsei, the influence of religion on economics is greater than the opposite influence of economics on religious beliefs and practices. This opinion is also held by Meinhof.<sup>6</sup> In the *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*<sup>7</sup> Berner, however, criticizes him as well as Ed. Hahn, who agrees with Meinhof, but later on

economic sphere traces of influence from Baumann's three cultural circles are found but on the whole the old Nigritic culture predominates.

<sup>3</sup> Dr. A. SCHMIDT, *Der Markt in Nsei*, (Koloniale Rundschau: 1940) pp. 122-43, and *Arbeit und Beruf im Leben des Eingeborenen von Nsei im Grasland von Kamerun*, (Koloniale Rundschau: 1941) pp. 325-64.

<sup>4</sup> "Mir ist es seit langem eine Selbstverständlichkeit, dass das tragende Fundament jeder Kulturform die Wirtschaft ist, und dass darum auch das Verständnis der Gesellschaftsform von der Wirtschaft her zu verstehen sein wird. Ich stimme Grosse vollkommen darin bei." (*Die Bambuti-Pygmäen vom Ituri*. (Brüssel: 1948) II, pp. 285-6.) Schebesta refers to Grosse's book on: *Die Formen der Wirtschaft* (Freiburg: 1896).

<sup>5</sup> As arts form another main factor of culture I add, that E. von Sydow attempts to deduce the origin of arts from religion in his book, *Kunst und Religion der Naturvölker*. In his review of this book (*Anthropos*, XXII, 1927, pp. 1013-14) Hoeltker believes Sydow's standpoint to be a useful "Arbeitshypothese". He also mentions from Sydow's book that Grosse, Kühn, Woermann claim arts to be dependant on economics, while Graebner stresses its dependance on sociological phenomena.

<sup>6</sup> *Die Religion der Afrikaner in ihrem Zusammenhang mit dem Wirtschaftsleben* (Oslo und Leipzig: 1926).

<sup>7</sup> Vol. 62 (1932) pp. 210-14.



K. Helbig<sup>1</sup> published in the same periodical his study: *Sichtbare Religion im Bataklande auf Sumatra*, which is based on one tribe just as my study is. He gives practical examples of the religious influence in various aspects beside economics. Here I wish to refer also to a religious-

economical study on the Bakosi done by Staffe<sup>2</sup> as this tribe lives in the Manenguba mountains, namely in the neighbourhood of the Nsei, in the Kumba Division of the British mandated territory of the Cameroons.

## I. NOTES ON RELIGION AND ECONOMICS IN GENERAL

Malinowski<sup>3</sup> gave a very good definition of developing economics and its connexion with religion. He said: "Labour, which is socially organized and collectively continuous, regular, periodically performed not according to the whim of the moment or some immediate plan with the due consciousness of aim... is only caused by urgent needs for performing correctly certain rites." I think that Malinowski is right. In the following description of religion and economics I will show a corresponding simplicity of both.

A planned ritual work fruitful for developing economics is practically unknown in Nsei religion. The special impulse to create works of art is rare, because the performances require very few objects and extended rites. The wooden masks used for their death-cult are of a high standard of art. They are, however, seldom carved, for they last a long time and the older they are, the more valuable they become. There were neither decorated temples nor altars, only stones mark the place of worship, of which the more important are screened off by a mat round a tree. The sacrifice was brought in a most inconspicuous manner and by the priest only. At the start of the annual fertility cult I had the unique opportunity of participating in a sacrifice made at every shrine in the village I lived in. Various shrines consisted only of a stone that I had never recognized as places of sacrifice before. The sacrifice then consisted in oiling the stones and of placing a few yams on them. On other occasions the blood

and parts of a killed fowl were added. The same words are always said: "Give us numerous boys, give us numerous girls." Once a year during their fertility cult a particular cycle of rites is performed, but it is not an economic incentive as the separate ceremonies are performed by smaller groups, who use the same customs that are employed for worshipping gods and ancestors in general. The late Professor Ankermann, specially interested in religion,<sup>4</sup> spent a couple of months in this district in 1910, also told me, how very undeveloped was the cult amongst these tribes.

It is difficult to decide whether in Nsei polytheism or ancestor worship is dominant. Both are closely intermingled. In most cases where ceremonies were performed they took place in honour of the ancestors. A compound, lacking an ancestral stone, is inconceivable. I attended one such ceremony where a new compound having been built, the stone of the ancestor was conveyed to it. The ceremony was like a death-rite. The supreme deity called *Mbonga* (the linguistic root connected with pottery) has no worship. Only at important events is his name mentioned. Three spirits are worshipped by the whole village; the supreme one causes the birth of twins and from his fountain the young daughters of the royal family fetch the water for the annual rejuvenation of the chief. Minor spirits are worshipped only by the inhabitants of each of the thirteen subvillages most of these being penates. Their religion, mingled with magic, employs different kinds of oracles and medicines.

(1912).

<sup>1</sup> Vol. 63 (1933) pp. 231-424.  
<sup>2</sup> Staffe, A., *Ueber den Ahnenkult und die Haustierhaltung bei den Bakosi* vol. 68 (1936) pp. 369-73.

<sup>3</sup> *The Economic Aspect of the Infichiuma Ceremonies*

<sup>4</sup> See Ankermann, B., "Bericht über eine ethnographische Forschungsreise ins Grasland von Kamerun", *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, vol. 42 (1910) pp. 288-310.

The natives do not attach much store to worship but are eager that the cult be carried out according to custom and that nothing be omitted. Just as their attachment to supernatural ideas is manifest in many gods and not in abstract ideas, so their worship needs objects.

Now the corresponding simplicity of Nsei economical structure may be described in a few lines and illustrated by some tables.

The family is practically selfsupporting. The men do a little handicraft and trading, but their main occupation, i.e. the most important job in their own point of view, is to help their wives in the fields during the various seasons and do odd jobs around their homes. With the exception of their huts, their daily food and a few pieces of clothing and ornaments, their personal wants are few. As far as a higher standard of living can be observed between noble and humble families it is merely a matter of quantity and not variety of goods. These additional goods are in most cases not the result of their own work but

that of younger members of the family who labour for the head of the compound. European influence is only just beginning, only a few European goods filtering into the villages. Neither European plantations nor stores of any description exist in Nsei or in the neighbouring villages. The use of European goods, with the exception of men's clothing, is still a luxury.

The following tables illustrate the traditional stage of economics. There are 384 craftsmen and 121 goat-owners, hunters fishermen, lumbermen as against 124 traders, who sell mostly local goods. However, people are not fully occupied with their business; they like to change, to have short working hours and are content with a small income. All this indicates that their occupations are merely side-lines. Of the 106 young men who do part time work on the plantations down on the coast near Victoria, the majority return to Nsei in due time and take up the usual form of living.

#### 1. Occupations of the men of Nsei<sup>1</sup>

<i>Main-occupations</i>		<i>Miscellaneous</i>	
Weavers (raphia bags)		Goat-owners	32
(raphia mats)	138	Hunters	35
Palm-wine tappers	125	Fishermen	19
	<hr/>	Lumber men	35
	263		<hr/>
<i>Other handicrafts</i>			121
Potters	46		
Smiths	13		
Roof-thatchers	11		
Rope-makers	6	"Chinda"	18
Wood-carvers	12	Clerks	1
Makers of leatherware	5	Policemen	5
Cap-makers	8	Dispensers	1
Butchers	17	Roadworkers	26
	<hr/>		<hr/>
	121		51

<sup>1</sup> The Government nominal role of tax-payers (1937) enabled me to obtain the names of the adult male inhabitants. My statement is based on the information given to me by a group of nobles in each subvillage of Nsei.



<i>Traders in goods</i>		<i>Traders in fire-flints</i>	3
Materials, cloth	30	Drum-makers	1
Raphia bags to coast	2	Salt producers	1
Maize	15	Carriers	2
Palm-oil	13	Horseboys	1
Tobacco	14		
Cola nuts	22		8
Camwood	11		
Gun-powder	15	Young men working at coast	
Hoes	2		106
	124		

## 2. Description of trade and its profit (examples)

	<i>Place of purchase</i>	<i>Place of sale</i>	<i>Turnover</i>	<i>Capital</i>	<i>Weekly earnings</i>	<i>Profit</i>
<i>European materials</i>	At coast Duala Calabar Victoria	Nsei Ndop- valley	3-6 months	£5-15s.	7s.-1s. 6d. average 5s.-3s.	average 8s. for every £
<i>Camwood</i>	Grasslands Bali Bameta	Nsei Ndop- valley	few weeks	8-10s. (sale of one load)		
<i>Gun-powder</i>	Grasslands Bali	Nsei Ndop- valley	2-3 months	some £'s		

## 3. Goods transported to coast and profits of sale (example)

<i>Goods</i>	<i>Purchase</i>	<i>Sale</i>	<i>Profit</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
20 dishes (pottery)	60d.	120d.	60d.	sold to Natives
10 raphia bags	40	80	80	sold to Natives
9 raphia baskets	27	54	27	sold to Europeans
2 raphia mats	8	12	4	sold to Europeans
5 knives	20	30	10	sold to Natives
8 pieces of biltong	24	24	—	sold to Natives
1 bag of peanuts	18	30	12	sold to Natives
1 bag of pumpkin seeds	30	42	12	sold to Natives
1 small tin of butter	12	18	6	sold to Europeans
4 monkey skins	32	36	4	sold to Europeans
2 wooden masks	16	36	20	sold to Europeans
	287d.	482d.	195d.	
	£1. 3s. 11d.	£2. 0s. 2d.	16s. 3d.	

4. *Weekly process and profits of labour in crafts*

(example)

<i>Crafts</i>	<i>Process of labour</i>	<i>Production</i>	<i>Profit</i>
<i>Raphia weaving</i>	1st day fetching grass from the bush 2nd day sorting the grass 3rd day dyeing & drying 4th-6th day weaving	5-18 bags average: 9 smaller bags, each $1\frac{1}{2}d.$ -2d. or 6 large bags for farming, each 4d.	$2/6$ $7, 1/2$ average: $1/6$
<i>Pottery</i>	1st day fetching clay & mixing same  2nd day starting pottery 3rd-4th day pottery 5th day drying 6th day fetching firewood, baking	pipes for men 20 pieces, each 1d.  pipes for women 30 pieces, each $\frac{1}{2}d.$	$2/6$
<i>Tapping of palm-wine</i>	daily tapping $\frac{1}{2}$ hour (mornings distance to the bush $\frac{1}{4}$ -1 & evenings) hour's walk	24 calabashes each $1\frac{1}{2}d.$	3/-
<i>Smithying</i>	1st-3rd day chopping wood & cutting it up  4th day making char-coal 5th-6th day smithying	20 knives each $\frac{1}{2}d.$  23 axes each 6d.	$2/6$ $1\frac{1}{2}$ average: $1/6$

## II

## RELIGIOUS IMPULSE ON ECONOMICS

For my purpose to show how religion influences economics, the simple structure, both of religion and economics, is favourable. The main lines stand clear. The dynamic force which builds up the economical structure derives from the main feature of the ancestor cult. Only the sacrifice brought for the ancestors by their descendants will eliminate death and ensure immortality

which in Nsei, as well as amongst many African tribes, is thought to be lost only by guilt.

I agree with Staffe,<sup>1</sup> who claims that the ancestral offerings are the most important acts in the lives of the natives as well as being the fundamental reason for polygamy. The status of the latter compared with other African tribes is

<sup>1</sup> Ibid. p. 370.



still very high in Nsei.<sup>1</sup> I shall be able to show again and again that the aim of polygyny, being a religious purpose, rules the economics of the Nsei and overshadows all the other aims which could possibly be connected with polygyny.

Religious impulse as a dynamic force can be found in both economical divisions—on the one hand in such work as ensures the supply of their daily needs and on the other hand in the supplementary earning of money. The reason, why I begin with the latter is because here the religious influence is particularly clear and at the same time its originator.

### 1. *Religious impulse in the sphere of money making*

From olden times the men of Nsei have had to *lobolo* their wives and according to old custom *lobolo* has partly to be given in money (iron, cowry shells, before European money came into use) and the latter was and is considered an essential gift like palm-wine and oil. Until today money is earned and saved primarily to be invested in wives.

Now according to the importance of polygyny for the Nsei this *lobolo*-money has become the stimulus in the whole of their economic structure. Thus money is earned for any economical purposes rather than for biological needs which again can satisfy cultural ones, e.g. the continuance of the ancestral cult. I can explain it by two examples: (a) The money invested in a wife yields interest only in so far as the Nsei women provide their family's subsistence, namely by farming, but from the European point of view such money yields no interest as none of the products of their labour is used to increase the wealth of the family or used for a higher standard of living. The wife is even a cause of expense, her husband

has to buy her a weekly ration of meat, oil, salt and occasionally a loin cloth as well as ornaments. Also, her family has to be provided with presents. Only if the husband has daughters born to him does he obtain a return on the *lobolo* for his wife. I have, however, noticed nowhere any accumulation of riches in this way. *Lobolo* is merely used to obtain more wives, either for himself or else for his sons. (b) The *lobolo* is high in comparison with other economical goods, thus underlining the fact, that a wife is a most valuable possession. The *lobolo*, actually, represents years of labour, presents to the bride's family as well as the money a man could earn in 30 weeks of labour.

In the future *lobolo*-money may be the impulse that will cause money-making to increase as I observed a tendency to raise the amount paid for *lobolo* in comparison with that for manual labour, although in fact then only a certain number of young men had the opportunity to earn the entire *lobolo* during their stay at cost. Much less possible is it for the elder men, the nobles, to provide the whole *lobolo* in cash, because then the *lobolo* would increase from £5-£6 to £12, still a fantastic sum.

This fact that money is needed mostly for *lobolo* as a ritual purpose explains an interesting labour rhythm in the various stages of the men's life.

It is only the young unencumbered, unmarried man, who really needs money. Thus he starts a flourishing trade with the coast where he exchanges native products for materials, salt and other goods still regarded as luxuries. In his own village he is an industrious craftsman.

The newly married man is already bound. He must be within reach of his family in case of illness, etc. His income is smaller because his trade is merely with native products like cola-nuts palm-oil, cam-wood, etc., which he obtains from

<sup>1</sup> The Government nominal role of tax-payers (1937) gave 456 married men, of whom 43 per cent were married to two to more women. The remainder were mostly young married men, of whom it can be supposed that the greater part of them would take a second or more wives later on. In the whole village only 60-70 men were attached to the missions and lived monogamously. 598 women were married to polygamists, whilst 268 were still in a monogamic stage. How strong

polygyny was, can be illustrated by the fact that Evangelistic Missions, admitted women living in polygyny into the Christian Church. The average noble had 5-10 wives, the chief of Nsei (then only 28 years of age) had already 17 wives. In the neighbouring villages the chiefs have an average from 40-60 wives, one of them 60 and another one more than 100. I was told that the Bikom chief, now brought into the lime light by UNO, had more than 200 wives.

the neighbouring villages. But already he makes little use of his opportunity of making money.

The man in the prime of his life does only the odd jobs around the village and his own compound. He keeps himself busy with the traditional tapping of palm-wine, raphia weaving and herding a few goats.

There is a very special group of men consisting of such sons as have already inherited their deceased father's compound together with his widows as well as a couple of young brothers living and working in this compound. These sons have just started to live the life of the older men as there is no necessity for them to pay *lobolo* and also they have others to do the manual labour for them. Now it would be wrong to describe these owners of compounds or the elders as idle. It is their duty to keep the family as well as the tribe together and to contact the ancestors. All this is performed by calling various meetings which give them the opportunity to fulfil these duties.

To sum up I can say: manual labour decreases with increasing age; domestic and tribal life becomes more and more important.<sup>1</sup>

The rhythm of labour for each individual is based in religion. The daily life in the eight-day-week is governed by the rhythm of their cult.

1st day is an ancestor memorial and market day; farming forbidden;

2nd day is an ancestral and market day; half holiday, meetings;

3rd day men prepare for manual work or trade; half workday;

4th-7th day whole day's work, according to occupation; ritual dancing in the afternoon of the 6th day;

8th day preparation for market, arrival of the itinerant traders, who are guests in the various compounds.

Then any domestic festivity within the extended family was of ritual importance during these days, all work ceased. Especially in the case of death, women were forbidden to do farming for 1-3 days. Hence little time was left for actual work in the larger families, but at the same time the necessity for earning *lobolo* became less because of the larger number of marriageable daughters.

Their economical organizations are connected with the cult.

As mentioned above a market day is held on the ancestral memorial day. Although Nsei is a large marketing-place in the wide Ndop-valley and in spite of the large number of traders, who visit the market, even the most ambitious of them (i.e. traders in clothing) were pleased, if they found 3-4 buyers. The economical function of the market is of less importance than that of the things connected with the ancestral sacrifice which has to be done in the chief's compound before the market could be opened. Characteristic of the market atmosphere was the shrines erected at the entrance of the market as well as in the middle of the market square.<sup>2</sup>

The second economical institution in Nsei is a kind of "savings bank", well known amongst anthropologists as "Kredit Ring" ("ring of creditors").<sup>3</sup> This system shows clearly their ability to organize economic life, but according to my investigations, again this money was used mostly for family purposes. The meeting of this credit society in itself is surrounded by magical customs. The men drink palm-wine strengthened by magic (fertility) and once a year, when the charm is renewed the whole family has to participate in drinking this palm-wine. In that subvillage, where I lived and which consisted of 74 compounds 8 such *tsya* (savings bank) existed. Once a week each was punctually attended by about 20-30 men.

of meetings had been there every third day, only 5 men every second day, all other men more.

<sup>2</sup> Then a social event: the meeting of the nobles to greet the chief and to discuss the administration of the village was of great importance while everybody used the market day to meet friends and to discuss private affairs.

<sup>3</sup> See E. MEYER, *Kreditringe in Kamerun* (Koloniale Rundschau: 1940) vol. XXXI, pp. 113-21.

<sup>1</sup> Koloniale Rundschau: 1941, *ibid.*, pp. 325 ff: my investigations on the life of 22 men of different ages over a certain period showed that the average time bestowed on labour was more or less the same as that used for leisure and meetings. There was a difference, however in the case of the elders and owners of compounds. These (11) men bestowed on labour no more than 6-10 half days, the remaining (9) men 15-20 half days. A man who attends the least number



## 2. Religious impulse in the sphere of selfsupporting economics

Under selfsupporting economical ambitions labour is done for the welfare of the family, but the ambition of the Nsei is more to bring up a family and not to raise the standard of their family's living; the latter is the aim of Europeans, where the parents work to provide better living conditions for their children. Also one cannot compare the existing conditions of our peasants in Europe, who aim at a large family in order to improve labour conditions on their own farms. A native village such as Nsei is not concerned merely with an increase in population. The ambition for a large family is due to the demands of their ancestral cult.

## 3. Religious impulse in the sphere of agriculture

Religious motives underlie the amount of land cultivated. Land is not an object to be bought or sold, but the chief or his chief consellers allot land only to such men who wish to establish or enlarge their families, thereby increasing the numbers of the cult worshippers. Thus as farming is done by women only the number of women ultimately regulates the amount of land allotted. One of my informants once said: "We cry out for people, not for land." As land is not scarce with regard to the number of women farming a number of fields remains untilled.

No fields are cultivated for economic purpose. Maize, abundantly offered in the market, is brought in by people of other villages, e.g.

### Farming in general

*Example showing the 10 fields of a typical polygynous family (3 wives)*

<i>Fields</i> its situation (distance from the village)	<i>Size</i> <sup>1</sup> (measured in labour)	<i>Fertility</i> of soil	<i>How fields are acquired</i>	<i>Whether tilled</i> <i>or untilled in</i> 1939
1. one hour	10 days work	very good	1931 received from <i>ntoe</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>untilled</i>
2. 15 minutes	5 days work	?	received from father	tilled
3. 15 minutes	5 days work	medium	purchased <sup>3</sup> for £2.	tilled
4. half an hour	5 days work	?	alloted by chief at time of marriage	<i>untilled</i>
5. 5 minutes	10 days work	medium	by chief councillor at time of marriage	tilled
6. 5 minutes	10 days work	medium	by head of royal clan at time of marriage	tilled
7. one hour	3 days work	?	by <i>ntoe</i>	tilled
8. 15 minutes	3 days work	?	received from female relative	tilled
9. 3 minutes	5 days work	good	received 1935 from <i>ntoe</i>	tilled
10. one hour	6 days work	good	received 1939 from chief concillor	tilled

<sup>1</sup> One labour day equals 3 women's whole day work. The three women work always together on the same field.

<sup>2</sup> It is merely a matter of allotment from another family and the remuneration given for improvements.

<sup>3</sup> *Ntoe* is the native name for the man appointed by the chief to look after the farm allocations.

*Species, amount, profit of crops grown in Nsei*

<i>Crops</i>	<i>Planted on farms</i>	<i>Quantity harvested</i>	<i>Sale</i>	<i>Profit per year (estimated)</i>
Maize	several	40-80 baskets, each 25 kg.	a basket 1s. 6d.	£3-15s. (50 baskets per year)
Ground-nuts	three	2-8 bags <sup>1</sup>	a bag 1s. 6d.	7s. 6d. (5 bags per year)
Cocoyams	one only; little seed in store	5 bags	a bag 11s. 6d. (5 yams 1s 2d.)	7s. 6d. (5 bags per year)
Country coco	several	8-10 bags	a bag 1s. 6d.	15s. (10 bags per year)
Macabu	one or planted among cocoyams	5 bags	6-8 macabu 1s. 2d.	7s. 6d. (5 bags per year)
Cassava	planted among maize, not by every woman			about 10s.
Sweet potatoes	one or two	8-10 bags	sweet 7-10 potatoes	1s. 2d.
Beans	planted among maize, not by every woman	maximum 1 bag	one small loaf (mixed with maize)	1s. 6d. 1s. 2d.
Spinage various kinds	planted among other crops	—	—	2s.

Bali-Kumbat, where both the sexes cultivate the fields. It is, however, not sold to the inhabitants of Nsei or other villages, but to traders, who take it down to the coast. Some older Nsei women are allowed to prepare cooked food and beer in order to provide the foreign traders with it by selling it to them in the market. Throughout the village one does not find a store-house. Each woman has only a small store-loft under the roof of her hut. Here maize and groundnuts are kept, while other crops are fetched from the fields whenever they are wanted. For the house-holding needs this little loft suffices them.

The following tables are given to underline the fact, that no more farming is done than is necessary to provide the crops to feed the children and the husband respectively. In polygynous households each woman in turn provides food for the husband.

Just as with the men so the capacity of women's labour could be put to better use. Women, even, though they do the whole farming are by no means overworked as Europeans sometimes are inclined to believe. I was able to prove this fact by my own observations as well as by an exact investigation I did on the rhythm of a woman's life similar to that of men already described. The soil, in Nsei is fertile. They could easily increase the crops harvested by improving their working methods, but they are not interested in the least and are content with their traditional manner of working. The Nsei are, however, eager to get farming done in its season. A family is abused, where there is insufficient maize harvested for the whole year and where during the dry season the head of the compound has to buy supplementary maize from that which

<sup>1</sup> Size of bag 50 x 40 cm., containing 25 kg. maize.



is offered for other purposes in the market.

It is the main interest of men—although they only assist women's farming to insure enough food for their families. When the cleaning of the fields or harvesting has to be done, the men stop all other work. Whoever is not in a position to work himself, is present as an adviser. Even in between times men show their interest in their wives farming. At the time of hoeing they bring them little presents to the fields. The younger men, particularly, are anxious to help in the compound of their future fathers-in law and in turn work in groups in order to please them by rapid work. In the same way they even pay their companions for the job and always treat them to palm-wine. Again nothing else than the subsistence of the family is to the fore.

#### 4. *Religious impulse in the sphere of domestic economics*

The Nsei are very diligent in house-building. The huts built on simple lines are nicely shaped: a pyramidal roof placed on a cube. In the compound, the huts form a square or rectangle. The young husband may share his wife's hut or else live in a shelter to begin with,<sup>1</sup> but according to their custom every wife requires her own hut, so as to give her sufficient accommodation to nurse her children.

As the Nsei like to work spasmodically, house-building keeps the men busy during a whole life time. All round about one finds half completed huts. They could be finished at once after the first stage, the leveling of ground, has become dry. Nobles are able to do some stages of house-building with the help of their neighbours or even the whole sub-village. Then they prepare a large feast which means, however, heavy expense. The average native does not like to earn the necessary money by crafts, etc. He prefers to use any opportunity to provide himself with the necessary material which mostly can be brought home from the bush. Often one sees men returning from the bush carrying trunks of raphia palms for lining the walls, other trunks

for supporting the roof or sticks needed for the walls before the latter are covered with mud or they bring home bundles of the special grass for the roof. Those who do the hard work of plastering the walls only with the help of their families can reduce the expense of hut-building to a few shillings, for the thatcher of the roof has always to be paid.

My survey of house-building in Nsei runs as follows: In the sub-village Mbösö (74 compounds) 14 huts were completed in 1938-39. Three families built their houses entirely without any help from their neighbours for plastering the walls, while 5 families had to call in their neighbours for this purpose. 6 families had a greater amount for assistance. The following table shows the various types of work and the estimated cost of a woman's hut erected with the help of the neighbours.

#### *House-building usual steps, expenses of labour feasts*

Leveling of the ground (1 day's work):

20 women receive palm-oil (5s.), plantains (2d.)

20 men receive palm-wine (10d.), cola nuts (3d.) 6/3

Fetching palmribs from the bush (1 day's work):

50 men receive a goat (6s.), palm-wine (3s. 4d.) 9/4

Tying and erecting frames for walls and roof (1 day's work):

40-50 men receive a goat or 10 fowls (6s.),

fufu (1s.) palm-oil (2d.), salt, pepper (2d.)

palm-wine (3s. 4d.) 10/8

6-8 medium tree poles (each 1-2d.)

Plastering of the hut (1 day's work):

15 men receive 5 fowls (2s. 6d.), fufu; palm-

oil; salt, pepper (1s.) palm-wine (10d.)

10 women receive 2 fowls; fufu; palm-oil,

salt, pepper, palm-wine (only 4d.) 4/8

Thatching the roof (3 day's work):

50 men cut grass and receive a goat, palm-wine 6/-

1 man, the roof-thatcher, receives 3 small

fowls, palm-wine (6d.), cash (1s. 6d.) 2/-

38/11

<sup>1</sup> The hut of the compound's head is higher than the woman's hut. The upper part of the out-side wall

in front just below the roof is sometimes decorated with carvings.

One sees that there is no expense for materials. These are not bought, unless somebody wants specially high poles for the house and has to obtain them from another village.

*Men and women have an equal share of labour and responsibility*

Finally I would like to draw attention to the division of labour between the sexes. As the descendants were the centre and aim in the life of both sexes, each according to its sex ability did its best and in this way men and women had an equal share of labour and responsibility.

In their domestic sphere the time the women spend on their work is longer and more steady,<sup>1</sup> while men are always in the position to choose their own time for work. Compared with European standards it would seem as if the women carry the chief burden and responsibility of feeding the family. But as already shown the men are in fact no less responsible, perhaps even more so, as being the heads and the priests of the families.

The following table shows the division of labour among the sexes and the time bestowed on it. The value of their labour, on a monetary standard, I found was about equal.

*Division of labour between the sexes*

Men	NOURISHMENT	Women
<i>Farming</i>		<i>Farming</i> <sup>2</sup>
January, February: Cutting of grass in preparation of fields <sup>3</sup>		January, February: Hoeing and spacing the beds, harvesting cocoyams
March, April: — —		March, April: Planting.
May, June: — —		May, June, July: Weeding and moulding up the plants.
July, August, September: Cutting of grass casually, carrying home the maize <sup>4</sup>		End of July, August, September: Harvesting.
October: — —		October, November, December: Tilling, planting of sweet-potatoes & vegetables.
November, December: Casual assistance in harvesting.		
<i>Fishing</i>		<i>Fishing</i>
January: Occupation of a few men only.		January: Done by all women during the time of low water in the streams.

<sup>1</sup> In his article on the "Status of Women among the Nilotics and Hamito-nilotics" (*Africa*, vol. V (1932) pp. 404-21) DRIBERG speaks of the marvellous faculty that native women have for endurance and that their sustained effort is amply exploited in their occupations.

<sup>2</sup> During the whole year the women work 3-5 days (partly half days) per week.

<sup>3</sup> For the farms of one wife daily 6 hours for 10 days.

<sup>4</sup> 20-50 loads from the farms of one wife.



*Men**Women*

## HOUSING

*Hut-building*

done throughout the year.<sup>1</sup>

*Care of hut and fence*

of the compound as routine.

*Hut-building*

little assistance to the men.<sup>1</sup>

## CLOTHING

*Purchase*

of loincloths, men's garments, caps, bangles, bead-necklaces as routine.

*Plaiting*

of loin-strings & loin-combs to decorate the loin-strings at the back.

## MISCELLANEOUS

*Manufacture*

of bedsteads, baskets, robes as routine.

*Plaiting*

of little baskets used for the daily maize-"bread".

## III. ADDITIONAL NOTES

In spite of the desire to produce a great many descendants, yet once children are born in Nsei the care of them is inadequate and the infant mortality is high. According to custom the birth of a child is wanted only at intervals of 3-4 years. I found, however, that of 51 women, who could have had 330 children, actually had only 101 children alive. It was impossible to enquire into the total number of children who died during baby-hood. It would have been tactless to ask about the dead. Barrenness seems to be not uncommon.

The cult not being concerned with the economical welfare of the individual stresses the character of the family as an institution and the establishment of a family based on personal affection is quite neglected. There is the cultural duty which regulates the rank of families as well as the rank within the families. By birth one is

already placed in the position one has to fulfil in life and according to one's fulfilment one is esteemed in the village. This last statement indicates the relation between religion and sociology, which is of no less importance than that between religion and economics.

It is interesting to see that Blohm's remark on the influence of Christian marriage on economics<sup>2</sup> fits into what I have tried to explain. From an opposite aspect he comes to the same conclusion, namely that religion rules economics. Thus he writes: "Die gesellschaftliche Gliederung des Stammes ist religiös bestimmt und seine wirtschaftliche Betätigung ist dadurch geregelt."<sup>3</sup> I have been concerned with the cultural status of an African tribe which still preserves the old African culture as do many other African tribes. But to-day, where in Africa the European influence has come to the fore, one may call

<sup>1</sup> See p. 23-24. <sup>2</sup> BLOHM, "Die Christliche Familiengemeinschaft im Xosa Volkstum", *Africa*, vol. VI (1933) pp. 431-55. <sup>3</sup> BLOHM, *ibid.* p. 447: "So musste naturgemäss eine neue gesellschaftliche Einrichtung, die, wie die christliche Eheform, Eingang gefunden hat, auch

umbildend wirken auf die wirtschaftlichen Verhältnisse als einem wesentlichen Teil der gesamten Lebensäusserungen. Die neuen-Verhältnisse bedingen einen anderen Lebenszuschnitt der als höherer Lebensstandard der Familie angesehen werden muss.

such a study merely an historical point of view useful for the understanding the changing African world. Blohm on the other hand, is concerned with the changing African world itself and with its future. But his essential outlook in this new Christian culture is the same religious one and as the Christian belief builds up monogamy instead of polygamy, it is deeply connected with family life. Blohm refers to two important economical factors with which I have dealt above, drawing attention to the changing condition which are taking place in agriculture and to the role of the descendants in the new Christian culture. As the latter is combined with the desire for a higher standard of living in a Christian monogynous family so the old method of farming,

Blohm says, will no longer suffice to pay the cost of living. Hence people are forced to cultivate more land and to sell their crops. Then the children cease to be in charge (*das Treugut*) of the ancestors, but become valuable property as agricultural labourers. I am sure, that Blohm is correct, that only the break with their old traditional point of view by their descendants will give them the impulse to change their economical conditions. Until to-day, however, the people of Nsei feel happy in their traditional life. During my stay amongst them I often pitied them, foreseeing that they will not be able to remain independant of European influence but will succumb to it.

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# THE JOKING OF "PALS" IN GUSII AGE-SETS

PHILIP MAYER

## SYNOPSIS

*The relationship of pals is marked by playful insulting (egosori), including obscenity and other classic features of joking relationships. A typical usage is a mutual form of address equivalent to "uncircumcized person".*

*The privilege of mutual playful insulting is based on common age-set membership (i.e. on having been initiated together). However, analysis shows that persons inevitably debarred from such joking include all who belong to adjacent generations, all very near kin and neighbours, most affines, and all who are too distant to maintain real friendship. Hence the typical age-set pals are distant classificatory brothers belonging to the same clan.*

*Not only is the joking of pals the formal opposite of respect (nsoni): it also differs significantly from normal brotherly freedom, which can coexist with subtler forms of restraint. It would appear that all forms of tension and of conscious ambivalence—whether structural or personal in origin—are inimical to the joking, which flourishes in the "safe area" of social relations. A comparison with the joking of grandparents and grandchildren supports this interpretation. It is suggested that the element of self-surrender in joking is at least as important as that of feigned aggression.*

### I

*Egosori*, literally "play" or "game", is the Gusii<sup>1</sup> word for the distinct pattern of behaviour which I shall call a playful insult. Words or actions which are insults at their face value are *egosori* in certain contexts, and are then not only not insulting, but positively intended to give pleasure. The more grievous the "insult" at its face value, the greater are the intimacy and affection indicated by its playful use. I use the word "pals" to mean those age-set contemporaries who are privileged to exchange playful insults.

Between the completest freedom of pals on the one hand, and the extremest "respect" (*nsoni*) on the other, there extends a range of intermediate

attitudes which overlap and shade into one another. But though we cannot look for perfectly sharp divisions on this scale, there is to hand a good index of whether the relationship of pals exists in a given case. This index is the use of *yaa* as a mutual term of address. *Yaa*, itself the mildest of the stereotyped "insults", is to a Gusii the badge of a special kind of freedom; we shall have to describe its implications in some detail.<sup>2</sup>

Three determinants of the freedom to exchange playful insults require discussion; namely, the structural, the personal and the situational. Structurally, playful insulting is associated with a limited number of relationships—those of age-

<sup>1</sup> The Gusii (known as Kisii to Europeans in Kenya) are a Bantu people numbering over 230,000. Their home is in the highlands of the Southern District of the Nyanza Province. When I went out to them in 1946 they had not previously been studied. I spent among them a total of 25 months between 1946 and

1949. A discussion of their social organization can be found in my paper on *The Lineage Principle in Gusii Society*, Memorandum 24 of the International African Institute, (Oxford: 1949).

<sup>2</sup> The use of *yaa* is discussed on pp. 36 ff. and 38 ff. below.

set contemporaries, of grandparents with their grandchildren, and of the parents of spouses with each other. The personal factor, on which Gusii lay much emphasis, is the existence of real friendship and cordiality between the individuals concerned. The situational factor sometimes rules out playful insulting between persons who are normally privileged to use it; on the other hand, it sometimes entitles persons who would normally not be privileged.

Not all age-set contemporaries are pals, so that after describing the relationship it is necessary to define its field.

## II

The Gusii have nothing like the elaborate age-set organization of their Nilo-Hamitic neighbours, Kipsigis and Masai; their age-sets are rudimentary and resemble rather those found among the Bantu of North Kavirondo.<sup>1</sup>

As a principle of seniority, age-set membership is overshadowed among the Gusii by membership of what I call the generation and the age-group. The generations are strata of classificatory kin, extending throughout the clan,<sup>2</sup> and through the kindred of each individual; they are characterized by the mutual respect which obtains between every two adjacent generations. The age-groups are based on physical age in conjunction with the *rites de passage* of initiation and marriage.

The age-sets are composed of persons initiated in the same year. They have no internal organizations, corporate interests or solidarity. Structurally they are unimportant. They are not related to the military organization, nor to the pattern of lineage (the basis of political organization), or of neighbourhood. Initiations are held annually in the resting season after harvest, and age-set

seniority therefore ascends by very small, very numerous degrees. Membership of the set, determined once for all at initiation, lasts throughout life. But while the regulation of seniority by reference to the age-set hierarchy affects mainly the younger people and loses significance as the years go on, the relation of equality between members of one set may retain a meaning right into old age.

The usual vernacular term for the age-set is *ekiare*; the members of the set are *abakiare* (sing. *omokiare*).<sup>3</sup> *Abakiare* are designated by a common name which also serves to identify more generally the year in which they were initiated. The season of initiation, coming immediately after harvest, coincides with the season of most dancing and merrymaking, and it is by means of popular topical songs that the year's name gains currency. (Some age-set names recall a natural portent or visitation;<sup>4</sup> others, the state of food supplies;<sup>5</sup> others notable events in the tribal life, or current fashions.<sup>6</sup> A few were explained to me simply as "the name of a song that was being sung".) The age-set name is a collective equivalent to the personal names which young people declare at dances and pay the musician to insert into his song.

Though the age-set nominally includes both sexes—girls and boys being initiated by means of parallel ceremonies—the basic status of men and women is so different that the system really works separately for each sex. In fact age-set relationships are much less regarded among women. I have little information on them, but this is not solely due to the defects in my material. Most of what I have to say relates to males only, except where the contrary is stated. As will be seen, the fact of having actually been initiated together, and not merely in the same year, is an important element in the comradeship of boy *abakiare* who become pals. With girls, on the other hand, "being initiated together" is a frequent phrase in the mouths of elders, referring to those who follow new fashions.

<sup>4</sup> e.g., "locusts", *nyangweso*; "eclipse", *enyakoyira*; "small-pox", *enyamoko*; "dried meat strips"—i.e. death of many cattle, *enyametanda*.

<sup>5</sup> E.g. "small granaries"—for surplus crops, *enyabiteria*; "wild grass"—eaten in famine, *enyamakongira*.

<sup>6</sup> E.g. "Compulsory registration", *enyagyapande*; "paper money", *enyamanoti*; Arabs (traders) *enyabagundi*.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. WAGNER, *The Bantu of North Kavirondo*, (1949) vol. I, pp. 373 ff.

<sup>2</sup> The Gusii exogamous clan (*eamate*) is also the main political unit and roughly coincides with a local community, each clan being associated with a particular territory.

<sup>3</sup> *Ekegori* and *rikora*, with corresponding personal forms, are also in use. *Abakegori*, strictly speaking, are people of similar physical age, while *rikora*, is "generation" in a wider sense; *rikora ria bono*, "the generation



other hand, marriage (which is patrilocal) scatters the initiation mates in a few years' time and drastically limits the possibilities of personal contact.

### III

Gusii always explained age-set relations in terms of the experiences of initiation itself.

To explain the comradeship of age-set pals, they would say that these "have shed their blood together"; that they were in seclusion together; that they killed birds together when they wandered about the bush as novices. The privileges of the seniors towards the juniors were explained as due to the fact that the older ones were already initiated when the younger were children, and were the proper people to initiate them when the time came; "they stung them with burning plants during *esubo*".<sup>1</sup>

Initiation takes place at or before puberty. It is still a highlight in a child's life. The experience is looked forward to for its own sake, and is recalled with pleasure in later years. After the first great ordeal of circumcision (or clitoridectomy) seclusion brings many weeks of indulgence—leisure, good feeding and companionship. It brings, too, on *esubo* night, the revelation of the mysteries (*chinyangi*), meaningless to the actors but impressive by reason of the profound secrecy in which they are hidden from uninitiated children and from the opposite sex.

The groups of children who undergo these memorable experiences together are small. Though initiation ceremonies are nation-wide, none of them is national; all are based on neighbouring units, taking place independently in every neighbourhood during the weeks of rest and plenty after harvest. The largest joint ceremony is circumcision itself, the circumciser being a local functionary who may serve a whole clan-

community or even two. Several neighbourhood teams<sup>2</sup> of novices may find themselves gathered together when they arrive at his homestead at sunrise, as a day is chosen independently by the parents of each team. An average size for the neighbourhood team itself is three or four children.<sup>3</sup>

During seclusion, novices are cut off from married people, but live a sociable life among themselves and with the slightly older initiated boys and girls. A girl is secluded in her mother's house, but a boy has a specially allotted *saiga* (unpartitioned hut) which he may share with other novices—sons of neighbours who have no suitable hut available in their own homesteads. Boys in one hut tend the same ritual fire and plant, and are together when the mysteries are revealed by a team of older lads on *esubo* night. *Esubo* is a young people's affair, in which the initiated but unmarried adolescents initiate their juniors without the help of adults.

In the weeks of seclusion, novices entertain each other in their respective huts (food being freely granted by the parents) and go out to play together at the traditional pastimes of novices: trapping moles, shooting at birds with the bows and arrows of the novitiate, or simply wandering around the countryside, free from ordinary duties. The novices of the immediate neighbourhood will of course know each other already and perhaps be regular herding-gang comrades. But a special feature of seclusion is the roaming farther afield in search of novices of other neighbourhoods—perhaps of other clan-communities—whom the boy may never have met before. Whereas at other times boys encountering stranger gangs on their regular playgrounds would be prepared to fight, novices are not allowed to fight during the seclusion period. They have special signals by which they recognize each other,<sup>4</sup> and they are supposed to confine themselves to peaceful games. The

<sup>1</sup> Where I use quotation marks without giving a specific reference, I shall be repeating something which a Gusii has said to me, but which would not gain from the addition of details about the informant.

<sup>2</sup> Generally speaking, such teams are drawn from the *sisaga*—the neighbourhood unit of economic co-operation and of mutual entertainment, consisting of anything from ten to fifty of the scattered homestead

in which Gusii live. <sup>3</sup> To be circumcized quite alone is a badge of shame, for this is the lot of the *enkuri* who has disgraced himself or herself by flinching away from the first attempted operation.

<sup>4</sup> Such as: throwing up a handful of ashes from the ritual fire, striking the arrow against the bow, and calling out twice by way of greeting: "You have grown fat!" (*Nakimonoretel*)

most serious offence is to fight one's own novice companions within the seclusion hut itself: this calls for a special sacrifice.

#### IV

Before discussing the relationship of pals which may ensue from being initiated together, I shall outline the relationship between members of senior and junior age-sets. This has its main importance among young and especially unmarried men.<sup>1</sup> For, as already indicated, age-set seniority is immaterial between people of markedly different age, or even between near-contemporaries once they have reached full maturity.

The chief distinctive mark of age-set seniors is the arrogance with which they consider themselves privileged to order about the juniors, especially when a common task is being performed. I was told that in former days, before the Gusii *ebisarate* (cattle villages) became extinct in the 1920's, this attitude flourished among the unmarried youths and boys who camped out there in charge of the herds. For instance, when the dung had to be cleared out of the cattle-pen, those who had been initiated earlier—even if not older in years—would take advantage of the fact to bully others into doing the unpleasant task.

The verbal expression of this relation is *okogari*, which means addressing the junior as if he were an uninitiated boy. *Okogira* specifically means "to call *yaa*", and *yaa*—a word without other apparent meaning or linguistic connexion—is an address equivalent to *omoisia*, "uncircumcized boy" (or *egesagane* "uncircumcized girl"). "Yaa, *omoisia*, come here!" a youth will call to his junior, or "yaa, bring water!" "yaa, do this or that for me!"

It depends entirely on the context and the underlying personal relation between the parties whether *okogira* implies a high-handed assumption of superiority or a friendly kind of condescension. At the one extreme is the deliberately provocative

use of *okogira* which may have the effect of setting ablaze a threatened quarrel. Brawls sometimes arise over the beerpot, where men have been heating themselves, through the incautious utterance of *Yaa* or *omoisia*. At the other end of the scale is the affectionate use by a well-meaning senior to a junior whom he likes. I had many opportunities of noting this at a time when I employed as my servants a youth in his early twenties and a lad of about seventeen, who were on the best of terms. "Yaa, fetch me some firewood, you *omoisia*!" the elder would call, but in an easy tone without a hint of bullying. One also hears it sometimes in the mouths of fathers addressing their sons. I have known a married man to be addressed as *mosione* (my *omoisia*) by his old father in an affectionate mood. Another father, in my hearing cheerfully hailed his young son: "Yaa, you *omoisia*, I sent you to Aganio's, and where have you been?"

The junior's submission to being called *omoisia* by those of a senior age-set has nothing in common with the "respect" (*nsoni*) which characterizes relations between junior and senior kin. *Nsoni* is a mutual forbearance, whereas the submission to *okogira* is essentially the acknowledgment of a one-sided privilege. In fact if the junior should presume to *okogira* his senior, this is an abuse which ranks as a serious insult. Similarly, although a young man may call a girl of junior age-set *yaa* (here equivalent to *egesagane*, uncircumcized girl) even a senior girl or woman could not properly use it to a boy or man.

#### V

*Okogira*, then, is literally an implication that the other has not been circumcized. Hence it ranks as an insult with other offensive phrases based on the same idea: "You are like your mother in Luo country",<sup>2</sup> "you were circumcized on your thigh". Just as its one-sided use is the privilege of age-set seniors towards their juniors, so its more specific meanings (e.g. brother, bachelor).

<sup>1</sup> *Omomura* (sing. of *abamura*) is the term proper to the age-group which the boy enters at initiation and leaves either through marriage and fatherhood, or through reaching middle age. It has several other,

<sup>2</sup> The Luo, neighbours of the Gusii, are for them the prototype of the uncircumcized peoples.

mutual use is the privilege of age-set contemporaries. In this context it is regarded by Gusii as one of the many possible signs of affection between pals and is termed not *okogira* but *okogiria*.<sup>1</sup>

*Okogiria* is usually confined to *abakiare* of the same sex, but as a sign of good-humoured familiarity on special occasions it may be heard between a youth and a girl. It was during a marriage celebration—at a time of permitted sexual joking—that I heard a young man saying to one of his female in-laws, grinning broadly: "Do call me *omoisia*, I shall not mind—I shall like it!" I have heard youths who were good friends but definitely not of the same age-set, address one another as *omoisia ominto*, "*omoisia* of mine". In situations calling for mutual encouragement, too, young men *okogiria* each other without strict regard to age-set membership. This intimate address was used in the heat of battle and now survives on the football field. It is recalled in songs and sayings, as, "*Ambaisia*", be ready, and "close your anus with greenstuff."<sup>2</sup>

In battles, a junior could even *okogiria* his senior, appealing for his help as if he were his pal. "When surrounded by enemies he called out to an elderman of his side who was close by: 'Yaa, I am holding firm' and the other answered: 'Yes, yaa, hold firm.' The elder man would make a great effort to come and save the younger. If appealed to as *yaa* one would risk one's life."

Boys may be heard to declare nowadays that they do not care to submit to the one-sided *okogira* of their seniors, but will only tolerate being *yaa'd* "by one whom I love". Gusii always emphasized that "I can play with my *omokiare* because we love each other". For my benefit the mutual feeling of the pals who play with each other was sometimes described as similar to that between *abagesangio* or *abasaiga*. *Abagesangio* are people of the same sex and usually of similar age who help each other, especially by forming a voluntary working-team (*egesangio*) for mutual assistance in their daily tasks. They come together because they like and trust one another and enjoy working in company—not, like members of the large *risaga* working parties, merely because they happen to be neighbours who are automa-

tically invited. *Abasaiga* are men who share a *saiga* (unpartitioned hut) as their bachelor quarters, or sometimes go on using it as a common day-hut even after they have married and built houses for their wives. However, as Gusii carefully pointed out to me, the love of pals is greater than that of *abasagengio* or *abasaiga*; for theirs is not a co-operative relationship based on reciprocal help, but a friendship for friendship's sake. Pals help each other in trouble "for love", not because they expect a direct return. (Of course, it may happen that pals are at the same time *abagesangio* or *abasaiga* and the relationships amalgamate.) Playing at insults, in fact, is only one outward expression of their love for each other. Pals not only came to each other's assistance when fighting on the same side but, like kinsmen, would avoid attacking each other when they found themselves on opposite sides. Gichana and Ogeto, two famous *abagambi* ("judges") from whom present-day sub-clans of Getutu trace their descent, were pals, and would sit together discussing difficult cases while the members of their respective lineages were fighting each other. Gusii no longer know whether members of an age-set who were not actually pals were expected likewise to refrain from hand-to-hand fighting. "You never would spear the shield of an *omokiare*," an old man maintained to me; but further questioning made him add, "unless you did not love each other". I found that this vagueness about what follows from merely having been initiated in the same year, and what from the active, personal relationship of pals, was rather common when Gusii discussed age-set relations with me.

When I lived at Manga, my neighbour Nyang'wara—a pleasant but not specially distinguished elder—was often favoured with the company of the much-respected retired chief Aoga, who used to choose Nyang'wara's homestead when he had to spend the night in that district. Knowing that Aoga was not Nyang'wara's kinsman and has never been his neighbour, I remarked on this one day, and was immediately given the explana-

<sup>1</sup> Causative form.

<sup>2</sup> *Ebimwa* soft greenstuff which Gusii use for wiping away sweat.



tion. "Aoga and I are *abakiare*. We were both initiated in the year Ondari brought the Europeans—*Nyabigenda* (1906). When the fighting started everyone fled to this part. Aoga's father's place was burned down, so Aoga left the seclusion hut carrying his fire,<sup>1</sup> and came to join the novices of Kibagendi's place near here. I met him at Sensi<sup>2</sup> together with the other novices of this part. Many years later, when I was working as an askari of the sub-headman, I was sent to take a message to Chief Aoga. Aoga recognized me: 'Is Nyang'wara, my *omokiare*, still an askari? You come to me and be one of my *abagaka* (elders)!' So that was how I became an elder of the chief's *baraza*."

In many small but significant ways, pals with each other do not stand on ceremony. A man may walk into his pal's *saiga* without calling for permission first. I have seen a Gusii not bother to send for a stool for another who called on him—a courtesy normally offered to any man visitor—but let him squat on a log, because they were pals. When they visit each other pals do not expect to have meat slaughtered specially, but share any food that happens to be going. In fact quite a point is made of not slaughtering. If the host insists on killing an animal, he intimates that he wants to consider the other as a guest and not as a pal—that is, to limit their intimacy.<sup>3</sup> A pal of one of my acquaintances strolled into the homestead, caught a hen that was pecking around the wife's hut and called to the wife (who was busy just inside) that she should tell her husband who it was that took the hen away. In this free manner, which is normally out of the question even among close kin, tools or utensils will be borrowed from a pal, or his children made use of for running errands.

## VI

The most clearly distinctive mark of the intimacy between pals, however, is their indulgence in playful insults over and above the mutual

use of *yaa*. One element in this playing of pals is physical horseplay, with or without verbal insult and ribaldry. It may be a dig in the ribs followed by a burst of laughter; it may be a mock wrestling match. The wrestling of pals is always accompanied with a good deal of by-play and is sometimes very funny indeed. I remember my astonishment the first time I saw two dignified elders, getting on for seventy, suddenly fall to wrestling in the presence of a crowd of people who had come together for a marriage ceremony. Each in turn lifted the other in the air, glaring and grimacing fiercely, until both collapsed together on the ground, laughing as hard as they could. When young men have formal wrestling matches at *agetaorio* (the opening night of the main marriage ceremony) pals are specially welcome to engage each other, "because they do not mind who wins. If I throw my *omokiare* he will not be angry."

The verbal insults are of many kinds. I heard Nyang'wara say to his venerable friend Chief Aoga: "Go, with that chieftainship of yours, get away with you!" "When pals insult each other, those who hear it only laugh. I can say to my pal any insult I can think of, and even if I insult him in his own house he will not order me to leave." Or, as another Gusii summed up the situation: "My pal is delighted when I abuse him; he laughs and jokes. One uses insulting words in fun because it pleases him. And I also like him to abuse me in the same way." As the Gusii proverb says: "Companion of mine, my *rikora*,<sup>4</sup> never gets 'dark' (angry) when I insult." Another frequent kind of verbal insult consists in the use of expressions normally considered indecent, obscene or even unutterable. Even in my presence pals used exchanges like these: "You excrement, stop treading on me!"—Excrement yourself, get away!" But the true measure of the unique unrestraint of pals and the climax of their intimacy is to exchange pornographic

<sup>1</sup> This year takes its name *Nyabigenda* from the "firebrands" which were carried by novices driven out of their seclusion huts by the fighting and general confusion. The ritual fires could not be abandoned.

<sup>2</sup> An "open place" of the district: these areas with-

out settlement are specially favoured by wandering novices, who must not enter other people's homesteads in the ordinary way.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. p. 41 below.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. page 34, footnote 3.

references to the other's mother<sup>1</sup> and particularly to impute that he would be prepared for incestuous relations with her. "Eat your mother's anus!" is a specimen of this kind, or even the direct "copulate with your mother!" Normally no insult could be more frightful. But, "did they not sing the *esimbore* together?" say the Gusii—naming the song which the circumciser starts up when the operation is over, and which the novices and their escorts sing on the triumphal homeward journey:

"Little *abaisia* have had pain, *oyoo!* . . .  
 Mother's clitoris, mother's clitoris;  
 Intercourse with mother, intercourse with mother;  
 Mother's pubic hair, mother's pubic hair;  
 Little *abaisia*, have intercourse with mother!  
 —Little *abaisia* have had pain, *oyoo!*"

When pals have worked through their more harmless jokes, such a dreadful statement serves to increase their mutual delight and feeling of superb intimacy.

Though the essence of the relation is that pals do not take each other's insults seriously, it may be part of the fun to pretend to be offended and make some appropriate retort. An incident which neatly illustrates this kind of mock vengeance was described to me by someone discussing the reputed powers of the rainmaker, Oboge, who had just been seen leaving my presence. It seems that many years ago a pal of Oboge's, named Nyambariga, had mocked at him in jest, saying: "I hear that if you want to you can even produce elephants. Do bring some and let us see!" Soon afterwards, heavy rain began to fall; it continued all night and when it stopped in the morning everything was shrouded in dense fog. At last the fog lifted, revealing herds of elephants wandering at large. People ran to Nyambariga in panic and said, "Now look what you have done! You have caused all these elephants to be sent, and they are going to destroy our crops and houses."

<sup>1</sup> It may be noted that no such reference to one's own mother could possibly be made in jest. When similar expressions are used of one's own mother they are spoken in earnest as a form of solemn oath:

The point of the story is that Nyambariga—as he at once replied to justify himself—"was only playing with an *omokiare*." And indeed, Oboge's elephants knew better than to punish his pal in earnest. They did not touch any crops or harm anybody: they just passed through and disappeared.

The playing of pals, then is the spontaneous expression of a real friendly feeling. It is a privilege to be exercised at will, not a compulsive or obligatory pattern of behaviour.<sup>2</sup> Pals can also behave to each other exactly as to any other person with whom they do not have to exercise respect. They may spend hours together in serious conversation. But now and then they suddenly "feel their love for each other". It is to be expected that some little incident or fancy will set one of them off to demonstrate their intimate friendship by some speech or gesture that nobody but a pal would tolerate. An outburst of jesting, laughing, pushing or insulting will leave behind it a warm afterflow of intimacy. "I joke with my *omokiare* because we love each other."

Pals are not regarded as quasi-kin—and this is not the meaning of the saying "that they shed their blood together"—although there is a rule that they should not marry each other's daughters. Practically, the rule is unimportant. The disparity in age between a man and the daughter of his *omokiare* would make such marriage comparatively rare in any case. The meaning is rather that the respect observed between father-and son-in-law is incompatible with the comradeship of pals and should not be brought into actual or potential conflict with it.<sup>3</sup>

Gusii agree that a marriage between a man and the daughter of his *omokiare* would not really be incestuous. It would only show that the two men were not and did not intend to be good pals. As a matter of fact, marriage between the son of one pal and the daughter of another is not only permitted but preferred, which would certainly not be the case if they were quasi-kin, for among the Gusii marriage is absolutely forbidden as long as any actual cognatic bond can be traced.

"May I enter mother's bed if I did so-and-so!"

<sup>2</sup> On this point, cf. FIRTH, RAYMOND, *We the Tikopia*, (1936), p. 190 f.

<sup>3</sup> See p. 44 below.

We may contrast the rule which forbids a man to marry the nearest kin of his initiation sponsor (omosegi) who ranks as a classificatory father.<sup>1</sup> Marriages between children of *abakiare* are favoured because, unlike the prohibited marriage with the *omokiare's* daughter, they produce a relationship ideally compatible with age-set comradeship. Among the Gusii the parents of spouses are the only affines who do not "respect" each other but are potential joking partners.<sup>2</sup>

## VII

We have now to define who among age-set contemporaries are the persons who become pals and "play" with one another.

The native definition is that, "Those who abuse one another and are not angry are those who love one another." It was in this light that I was expected to regard as a special favour the surprising behaviour of one of my best Gusii friends, Gisemba, the marriage priest. One morning when I met this usually dignified elder at some distance from his home he glared oddly at me and barked: "What are you doing, trampling around here? Go away! Or shall I hit you?" A moment later he was laughing and shaking my hand. Having always found him particularly friendly and helpful, I was taken aback. On a second, similar occasion, noticing my surprise, the old man explained to the bystanders that since we had now become such good friends he regarded me as his *omokiare*. It was a genuinely meant compliment, borne out by the future behaviour of Gisemba, who remained my helpful and willing friend until I left.

When friendship ceases, playful insults are no longer possible. "If my *omokiare* is not a good man but is 'greedy' with me, I will not continue the friendship, and then we will respect one another (ogosikana) and not play any more." At Mwogeto, not far from where I was living, two pals quarrelled and came to blows because one had accused the other's child of repeatedly

letting cattle stray into his millet patches. Someone commented to me: "There are two ways of insulting, and one of them is playing, but the other is in earnest. Even pals may insult each other in earnest and may fight." In this particular case, the habit of playing as pals, interrupted for some months, was eventually resumed; but I was told of other, former joking pals who had become permanently estranged.

In the words of a Gusii proverb: "It is not the age-set, it is the mouths which agree." On the mere basis of knowing themselves to have been initiated in the same year, Gusii do not feel entitled to use insulting language in a jesting way, though if afterwards personal friendship develops between them the playful insulting can come with it. On the other hand, the fact of having actually been through one of the processes of initiation in company is more than a mere formal pre-requisite. It also gives a presumption that some degree of friendship does exist or will have opportunity to mature. Those who form a team to be circumcised together are children of one neighbourhood, and probably comrades already in the local herding gangs; while those of different teams who meet at the place of circumcision, or later during the wanderings of novices, are still—though drawn from a wider area—boys of the same or neighbouring clan-communities. That is, the boys who pass together through the most memorable experience of their adolescence are also in a position to keep up personal contact in later life. "I could not be the friend of one whom I see infrequently."

Nyang'wara had a former age-set pal who had moved away from their home in Getutu to Bassi, a distant part of Gusii country. "I could not play with him nowadays", he told me. "It is because we don't know each other any more." Depending as it does on personal feeling quite as much as on the structural fact of common age-set membership, the special relation of pals lacks entirely the enduring intrinsic force of kinship or lineage bonds. One elder illustrated for me very neatly the different effects of distance

<sup>1</sup> Or, to be precise, as father in some respects and grandfather in others: this relation is a curiously

involved one. "I call him grandfather but he is like a father", say Gusii. <sup>2</sup> Cf. pp. 45 f. below.



or time upon the two sorts of relationship. "A fellow-clansman (*omoamate*), as long as he is here with us, is just a clansman. But if we meet when he has gone far away, he and I will feel like close relatives though really our ancestor (i.e. common ancestor) was long ago. But if one who is *omokiare* has gone far away, so that we did not see each other—then when I meet him we will have become strangers, and he would be angry if I insulted him." The inhibiting effect of distance on the relationship of pals—either preventing the intimate feeling from maturing, or destroying one already established—was confirmed by my own investigations. When I asked a number of Gusii to enumerate for me all the personal contacts they kept up outside their own clan-communities, I found not only that those cited as pals were very few indeed compared with those cited as kinsmen, but also that they were geographically much more closely concentrated. In no case did a pal live further afield than in a neighbouring clan of the same Gusii tribe, whereas kinsmen could be traced in numbers of clans and usually in at least one or two other Gusii tribes.

### VIII

Besides the basis of personal friendship, and the reasonably frequent contacts which this requires, there is another essential postulate without which the relationship of age-set contemporaries cannot ripen into that of pals. This is the absence of obligatory mutual "respect". Since obligatory respect in one or other form covers a very wide field of Gusii social relations, we have here one explanation why active pals are so few by comparison with the number of *abakiare* initiated in the same year. We notice also that respect rules out the playful insulting within the inmost circles, whether of kin or of neighbours, so that extreme closeness, no less than extreme distance, is incompatible with the relationship of pals.<sup>1</sup>

Some situational and special kinds of respect which inhibit playful-insulting may be briefly dealt with first. One of these is the mutual attitude of host and guest. I have mentioned that the pal is to be welcomed without formality, to share whatever food is available and to sit on whatever is handy, while the guest must be treated with courtesy; a guest is offered a stool, and if he comes from far away or is specially welcome, will have meat killed for him by the host. Sometimes a friend is treated as a guest in one context and as a pal only in another where there is no call for the *ogosikana* of host and guest. When Ogeto came to the homestead of his friend and *omokiare*, Kibagendi, the latter received him with courtesy and slaughtered a goat for him. "When we meet in the market, or at the tribunal, or in the open, we insult each other freely", Kibagendi afterwards explained to me, "But this time I had to respect him as a visitor from far away. I did play with him a little and we called each other *yaa*, but I did not forget that he was a visitor from far away."

Respect also arises between a man and his former marriage-witness or "best man" (*omong'wansi*). They, like pals, owe the form of their relation to having been closely associated in an important ritual, and are supposed to be great friends: but even if they are age-set contemporaries they do not play with one another. When I asked Nyang'wara to show me the homestead of his nearest pal, he pointed to Oiro's, but immediately added: "I cannot play with him any more now, because he has been my *omong'wansi*. After doing *okong'wansa* we must respect each other. I slaughter for him and he for me when we visit; I cannot call him *yaa* or insult him—he would be angry."

Turning to the far more important structurally determined forms of respect, we find first of all that Gusii speak of respect as something existing typically between those who call one another "parent" and "child".<sup>2</sup> In this technical sense, *nsoni* is manifested in numerous conventions and

<sup>1</sup> Cf. pp. 42 f., 44 f. below.

<sup>2</sup> The relevant terms are: *tatamoke* (little father), *makomoke* (little mother) and *omwana* (child); *mame*

(male mother) and its converse *omoigwa*; *tatabiare* (father-in-law or son-in-law), *makobiare* (mother-in-law).

rules of behaviour which limit, for instance, the right to enter the other's living-room through the front door, to sit on his bed or personal stool, to use indecent language in his presence, or to touch his corpse after he is dead. In particular sexual familiarity with his wives and sisters is interdicted.

Boys who call one another "little father" and "child", according to the rules of classificatory kinship that extend throughout the exogamous clan, are not only certain to be among those of the clan or neighbourhood community who were initiated in any one year, but may well have stood together under the circumciser's tree. On such a basis they may playfully insult one another in jest, as long as they are still young boys (and therefore not fully subject to all the rules of *nsoni*). But sooner or later the obligations of respect will supervene and put an end to their familiarity. The point at which this may be expected to occur is determined largely by the distance of the relationship, for the respect which obtains between members of adjacent generations has many degrees of intensity according to the exact relationship. With a real paternal uncle, playful insults begin to be regarded as improper even before the marriage of one of the relatives brings *nsoni* into full force. With a distant "little father" on the other hand—one who is clans man rather than kinsman—playful insults of a mild kind are tolerated even after marriage. "I may insult my *tatamoke omoamate* (classificatory father in the clan) as long as I do not say anything really bad. 'You excrement' is not too bad, but: 'Eat your mother's buttocks!' is something I can never say to *tatamoke*."

## IX

The ruling out of the familiarity of pals between persons of adjacent generations needs no special comment. More interesting in a sense, because less self-evident, is the way in which a subtler restraint between members of one generation seems to have the same inhibitory effect. Close

"brothers" can no more be pals than can "parents" and "children". The stereotyped attitudes of brothers and of pals, though at first sight both appear to be the antithesis of *nsoni*, are in fact markedly different: an analysis of the difference may help to throw some light on the nature of the relationship of pals.

"Brothers", people of one generation, are free from all the formal rules of *nsoni*. They may enter each other's living-rooms, use each other's stools, see one another naked, exchange indecent conversation, and so on; in short, they are deemed to be without the sexual shame that is so strongly marked between adjacent generations. But though this formal freedom applies equally to all those classified as brothers, in fact the closest "brothers"—such as siblings and the children of siblings—are recognized as subject to a sort of mutual restraint, enough to rule out the familiarity of pals. Gusii say that "children of one father must respect each other"—*ogosikana*, the same verb that more usually means the formal observance of *nsoni* between adjacent generations. If very near kin of one generation have been circumcised or secluded together, they use playful insults only for a short time afterwards and in a mild form.

*Ogosikana* between brothers is explained by the Gusii less in terms of sexual shame than of conflicting interests, though in fact traces of the former seem to be present too. The proverb has it that "brothers always fight for the mother's breast". Omunda put the same idea to me in his own way when he said: "If I were to use insulting words to my brother we would quarrel, because we are *abanyamwando*, 'people of one inheritance'." The common patrimony of brothers, which is the focus of their solidarity, is also the root of their rivalry. They will unite in its defence but quarrel over its division. Gusii say that when brothers are quarrelling it is of no use for anyone to intervene, because they will both together turn on the intervener and fight him instead. The rivalry implicit in brotherly relations is taken for granted to such an extent by Gusii that they rather expect quarrels to occur than express any special concern or surprise at them. "People 'of one' (*abanto abame*) have no regard for one another",

they say, or "People who live together are sure to dispute."<sup>1</sup>

It is obviously necessary, if dangerous disruption is to be avoided, that quarrels between near kin and co-heirs should be kept within bounds. The answer to this need, in the Gusii way of thinking, is *ogosikana*, "respecting one another". The greater the solidarity, the more essential is this mutual restraint. As the brother-relation becomes more distant, and the bond of potential heirship fades, we leave the field of *ogosikana* and approach—as will be shown—the special field of the joking relationship of pals.

As far as playful insults are concerned, there is, I think another aspect of brotherly restraint to be considered, one less apparent to Gusii themselves, because rather at variance superficially with their interpretation of the alternating-generation principle; this is the existence of an element of sexual shame. In spite of theoretical sexual freedom, there will of course exist between real and near classificatory brothers a necessity to avoid the crudest forms of insult—pornographic references to the other's mother—if only because the mother of one such kinsman is also a near classificatory mother of the other. That is to say, their common shame has a reflex in mutual shame. Generally speaking, too, the sexual freedom of real brothers tends to be more limited, even formally, than that of distant classificatory brothers. For instance, adultery with the wife of a near brother is considered the most grievous sexual offence after incest with a "mother" or "child"; and again, "the eldest brother is like father", and younger full-brothers should not inherit his widows. These points need not be amplified here, but may serve to show that the restraint of brothers has certain elements in common with the respect between adjacent generations.

## X

Close neighbours, like close kin, are not fitted to be pals. In many parts of Gusii country, kin and neighbours coincide. But even where this is

not so—for instance, in the mixed settlements of Getutu, where the neighbourhood group may include numbers of "dwellers"—those who live in adjacent homesteads will never be pals. The reason that makes playful insults not permissible seems to be that the closest neighbours, like brothers, are at the same time mutually dependent and apt to quarrel. "We are always working together, and so I am bound to offend you sometimes", I once heard a young woman explain to her mother-in-law who had complained about her.

That neighbours should remain on good terms is most important because of the witch-spectre which is so easily invoked in this context; one depends on one's neighbours and fears them at the same time. It seems that here, as in the case of brothers, playful insults are ruled out in a context where real quarrels are both likely and inconvenient.

The mutual attitude of everyday associates would seem to be in itself incompatible with the special feeling of pals for one another. Those who are constantly with one another will tend to take each other for granted, whereas pals practise a kind of behaviour which takes its savour from the very fact that it is out of the ordinary.

Most pals, then will be neither next-door neighbours nor from very distant homes; they will not be near kin, and never of adjacent generations; they will commonly be of one clan or, more rarely, of adjoining clans. The typical pal is a distant classificatory brother—*momura ominto omoamate*, "my brother of the clan". Whenever I asked Gusii which of their acquaintances they could playfully insult, I was given the names of such clan-brothers as being those of the *abakiare* by and from whom the most "cruel" insults would be tolerated. Where the actual kin relationship was still well known, I did not find that more than the mutual use of *yaa* was claimed by full-grown men, and perhaps some other mild verbal "joking" too. The distant clan-brothers, whether *abakiare* or not, are suitable partners for nearly all kinds of ribald exchanges and horseplay. Adultery with their wives or

<sup>1</sup> The difference between "solidarity" and the "friendship" which underlies joking relationships is

emphasized by RADCLIFFE BROWN, "A Further Note on Joking Relationships", *Africa*, April 1949, p. 136.



intercourse with their unmarried sisters, though not socially approved, is not a grievous offence either,<sup>1</sup> and, in fact, occurs quite commonly. Not only is sexual shame very slight between them, but the rivalry which is the obverse of brothers' solidarity has also decreased proportionately to the thinning-out of the bond of potential heirship. Thus neither of the reasons for mutual respect between real brothers operates between distant classificatory brothers. "Children of one father must respect one another, but children of one 'great grandfather' (i.e. ancestor) may play." And since the age-set itself has no corporate right or function, *abakiare* as such have no ties of common interest which might mean rivalry too.

Even so, the privileged freedom of pals remains easily distinguishable from the ordinary uninhibited behaviour of distant "brothers". Between the latter, a certain minimum of respectful behaviour is indispensable. A pornographic reference to the other's mother would provoke a fight; borrowing objects without notice would be resented; entering the hut unannounced would be a discourtesy.

Gusii do not regard themselves as equally privileged towards brothers-in-law. The kind of "play" which I have described is not practised with the wife's kin of one's own generation. "*Mokoyone* (brother-in-law) is not a person to be played with. I offer him a stool and kill meat for him." *Abako* (in-laws) are, in fact, entitled to specially generous entertainment, like all visitors "from far away". If a man marries the sister of his pal, playful insults and other signs of special familiarity are supposed to stop between them.

## XI

Among the Gusii playful insulting is found in association with two other structural relationships besides that of age-set contemporaries. Grandparents and grandchildren, provided that they

"love each other", may use the mutual address *yaa* and exchange most kinds of playful insults; so may the parents of spouses, *abakorera* as they are termed. The element of obscenity is tempered in these cases, for as the partners are kin the pornographic references to the 'other's mother could not be made without shame on the part of the speaker himself.<sup>2</sup>

Grandparents of either sex in either line may be one's partners in playful insulting. Those involved are usually actual grandparents, sometimes their siblings too. I never came across "playing" with a more distant classificatory grandparent. I do not think that there is anything against this in principle, but of course it is unusual for sufficient personal intimacy to exist where age is so very different, unless close kinship provides its basis.

The contrast between the respect accorded to parents and the freedom with grandparents is very marked, and can be noticed in children's behaviour without any great effort of observation.<sup>3</sup> For example, an elder sitting under the eaves of the hut where I visited him one sweltering day called out to his six-year-old grandson, "Come, you dog, get me some water!" to which the child promptly replied, "*Yaa*, you are a dog yourself, go and get me a drinking-cup, I am thirsty!" Such repartee from a child to his father, even without the *yaa*, would earn a rebuke: nor would a father use to his son an epithet as insulting as "dog" unless he meant to be regarded seriously. "If father uses such words to me, it is when he is angry and is about to beat me." *Yaa* from grandchild to grandparent—as well as the other way about—is quite often heard, the old people appearing much pleased to be *okogiri'd*-by young children. One hears also between grandchild and grandparent a different kind of "playing" that would be equally impossible between adjacent generations—the playful endearment by which those of opposite sex address one another as "husband" and "wife".<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. p. 41 above. The rule of clan exogamy is not accompanied by a horror of sex-relations with fellow clanswomen, unless they are close kin or of adjacent generations. <sup>2</sup> Cf. p. 39 f. above.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. FORTES, *Web of Kinship among the Tallensi*, (1949), p. 197.

<sup>4</sup> For the widespread occurrence of a similar kind of joke between grandparent and grandchild in other societies, and its theoretical significance, see A. RADCLIFFE BROWN, "On Joking Relationships", *Africa*, July 1940, p. 202; "A further Note on Joking Relationships", *Africa*, April 1949, p. 133 f.

Gusii say that one plays with grandparents because of the love one has for them. "Grandfather is *omogesangio*."<sup>1</sup> "Grandfather is like my *omokiare*." Great friendship is also cited as the reason for playfully insulting the *abakorera*, and they too are likened to *abagesangio*. The *abakorera* are people with whom one does not normally have much contact; partly for this reason, I have not made any first-hand observations of "playing" in this context. If one happens to have a pal in another clan, his child is considered a specially suitable match for one's own child, because of the conformity between the two relationships: those who formerly played as pals will now play as *abakorera* too. "We will go on playing because we are *abakorera*; we are not of the same clan, but now our friendship has been joined together by marriage, so that it will never cease." This is in direct contrast to the rules already mentioned, that if pals become related by marriage as brothers-in-law they must give up playing, and that if they were to become related as father-and son-in-law they would show they had never been good pals at all. The *abakorera* are the exception to the general rule that among the Gusii affinal kin do not playfully insult one another. I am inclined to relate this to the fact that *abakorera* have or expect to have grandchildren in common: that is to say, they expect to be able to play with the same descendants.

In the Gusii *abakorera* we evidently have a case in point for the illuminating analysis of Radcliffe Brown, and Fortes<sup>2</sup> according to which "joking relationships" tend to be found between people who belong to different social groups but are linked by personal bonds. It will be remembered that they assign to "joking" behaviour a function like that of respect, of avoiding conflicts in these ambivalent situations. As far as the *abakorera* are concerned, this interpretation fits in well with the ideas of the Gusii themselves, for they are clearly aware of what we should call the ambivalence in affinal relationships. ("Those

whom we marry are those whom we fight" is a typical saying.) Gusii are likewise aware that the kind of situation calling for "respect" is one where people who love each other nevertheless have in their relationship an element of disjunction (to use Radcliffe Brown's term), whether it be a conflict arising from opposed interests (between persons of similar sex) or a tension connected with sexual taboos (between persons of opposite sex). Mention has already been made of the reasons they give for *ogosikana* between brothers—reasons well in line with this interpretation.

In view of all this, it is striking what a different view the Gusii themselves seem to take of the other two "joking relationships", those with grandparents and with age-set pals. As regards the grandparents in particular, it can be said that Gusii are unaware of any element of tension. They say that "grandfathers are brothers", and that "I play with grandfather because he is my brother", but at the same time they point out that there is really a greater freedom with the grandfather, "because among brothers we have *ogosikana*". The *ogosikana* with brothers is connected with the idea that brothers are potential rivals; with the grandparent, on the other hand, rivalry is not supposed to exist. "We are so different in age, we cannot fight each other. Neither of us is strong." There are indeed no directly conflicting patrimonial interests in this relationship, such as are implicit in the relationships of brothers or of father and son. Gusii are not afraid to say, "Sons often want their father to die."<sup>3</sup> But such a remark would have little point if applied to grandson and grandfather. A Gusii has no direct interest in his grandfather's inheritance (all patrimonial rights being derived from the father), and he is not irked by discipline on the grandfather's part, which may well be the case where his own father is concerned. To him, the outstanding fact about the relation with the grandfather is its friendly freedom, in contrast with the tensions between parent

<sup>1</sup> Cf. p. 36 above.

<sup>2</sup> RADCLIFFE BROWN, op. cit.; M. FORTES, *The web of Kinship among the Tallensi*, 1949, p. 120, etc.; *The Dynamics of Clanship among the Tallensi*, (1945), p. 92 ff.

<sup>3</sup> With the object of elucidating model kinship atti-

tudes, I asked numbers of Gusii the question whom they would try to save first if all their kin were trapped in a burning homestead. Fathers and brothers always came out among the lowest on the list, the highest places invariably going to mothers, spouses and children.

and child and the restraint of full siblings.<sup>1</sup>

A similar unconsciousness of tension is implied when Gusii contrast the freedom of distant clan-brothers (the typical age-set pals) with the restraint of actual or close brothers. "If I insulted my real brother he would become angry. Sons of one father must respect each other; we are people of one inheritance. But sons of one "great-grandfather" (i.e. ancestor) may play".<sup>2</sup> With the age-set pal, as with the grandfather, opposed patrimonial interests are little in evidence. Being distant rather than near brothers, age-set pals will indeed belong to different clan-houses; sub-clans, or minor lineages (*amaiga*),<sup>3</sup> and may in some cases even be of different clans. However, the structural tension between lineages within the clan is mild, consistently with the fact that their solidarity is latent rather than active and tends to be overshadowed by the common allegiance to the clan.

If it is conceded that Gusii themselves see no element of ambivalence in the relation with grandfather or with age-set pal—although they do see one in the relation with affines, and in "respect" relations,—it still remains to be asked how much importance the sociologist should attach to the native view. We may, if we wish, dismiss it with the remark that an ambivalence may be no less real or important for being unconscious. On the other hand, it would be reasonable to grant that among the Gusii ambivalence and tension are at least comparatively unimportant—even if not absolutely so—in these two particular "joking relations". It might be advanced as a tentative hypothesis that in some kinds of playful insulting among the Gusii the main emphasis lies on the feeling of genuine freedom, while in others (between the affines who "play" with each other) there is apt to be more constraint—perhaps a sort of compulsive cordiality, or determination to remain on good terms, such as appears between affinal kin at their marriage ceremonies.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I will not assert that Gusii have no consciousness of the age rivalry analyzed by Radcliffe Brown and Fortes, but at least I have never come across any expression of awareness.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. p. 42 and 44 above.

Unfortunately my material, especially on the playing of *abakorera*, is insufficient to check this suggestion by reference to behaviour observed at first hand. But the common Gusii formulations: "I cannot play with so-and-so because he would be angry" and "I play with so-and-so because we love each other", and the remark that after a quarrel "we will respect each other and not play any more"<sup>5</sup>—are consistent with the idea that respect belongs to danger areas of social relations, and that its opposite—playful insulting—belongs rather to safe areas, where structural, personal and situational factors combine to give the greatest possible consciousness of freedom and relaxation. These safe areas lie in the middle distance of social relations. One limit to playful insulting between pals, as we have seen, excludes the persons who are nearest, socially and whose social ties are therefore strongest and most multifarious. This, the sphere of greatest solidarity, is regarded by Gusii almost *ipso facto* as a field of potentially dangerous conflict between individuals; because of the liability to quarrel, mutual restraint is needed. The other limit of playful insulting excludes those who are distant enough to be politically as well as personally opposed, for conflicts are inconvenient where there is a likelihood of embroiling whole political groups. In short, there are at both extremes—of closeness and of distance—structural tensions which add to the likelihood of conflicts and at the same time make them socially more dangerous. But with distant clan-brothers and with grandparents neither personal nor political tension is in evidence. Here, one is least conscious of motives for real conflict; and such conflicts, if they occurred, would not be supremely disruptive.

It may be useful to look back for a moment to the nature of playfully insulting behaviour itself. What makes *okogiria* so different in emotional content from *okogira* is the fact that one is mutual and the other one-sided. *Okogira*, however, friendly, consists in treating somebody

<sup>3</sup> These terms are defined in my paper *The Lineage Principle in Gusii Society*, (Oxford: 1949).

<sup>4</sup> Cf. my paper on "Privileged Obstruction of Marriage Rites among the Gusii", *Africa*, April 1950, pp. 122 ff.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. pp. 37, 41 and 40 above.



else as an uncircumcised little boy, without abating any of one's own claim to be respected; *okogiria*, on the other hand, implies that he and I are little boys together, and therefore that neither of us cares for the rules of social decency which become generally obligatory at the time of initiation.<sup>1</sup> I stress this point, obvious though it is, because I feel that in dealing with the phenomena of playful insulting there is a tendency to fasten too exclusively upon the theme of feigned aggression, and to neglect the no less important theme of self-surrender. With the Gusii at least, the emotional satisfaction clearly derives as much from being insulted as from offering insults. "My pal is delighted when

I abuse him, and I also wish him to abuse me in the same way."<sup>2</sup> When two adults feel free to behave as children together, casting aside for a time the respectful restraints of normal adult intercourse, we are justified in regarding their behaviour as a general release, of a wider and more simply pleasurable kind, over and above the specific release of voicing hostility which exists towards the joking partner himself. If we were trying to find in our own society the nearest parallel to the playful insulting of Gusii age-set pals, we might not go far wrong in looking to the behaviour of old schoolmates who enjoy calling one another "old boy", and exchanging slaps on the neck, or *risqué* stories.

## CORRESPONDENCE

From Rebecca Reyher,  
Care American Consulate General,  
Durban

To the Editors, African Studies

Gentlemen,

May I have the privilege of replying to the charges of inaccuracy and the innuendoes contained in the review of my book *Zulu Woman* in your June issue which I have only just seen?

Originally written immediately after my return from Zululand, the book was published fourteen years after the material was gathered because publishers to whom it was submitted claimed American readers were too remote from Zululand to be interested. After the war, on the advice

of anthropologists, it was sent to Columbia University Press—the Oxford Press was responsible for it only in England and the Dominions—and neither, they, nor I, knew of Christina's death—the reviewer implies a curious coincidence there—until we made inquiries through my government as to her whereabouts, as I wished to make her a present out of my royalties.

In all my arrangements I was guided by the former Magistrate, Mr. Oswald Fynney. His son, born and brought up in Zululand, acted as my interpreter. Christina appeared at my gate, offered to tell her story to me: it came as a complete surprise.

Mr. Sikakana ignored my statement in the *Foreward* that she was a woman with a pent up heart, is unable to recognize that that may be the most powerful motive in releasing a story.

<sup>1</sup> An initiated child is supposed to be distinguished from one still uninitiated by having acquired *obong'aini* or "sense". The criteria of *obong'aini* are those of social *savoir-faire*—"not playing with children", "not going naked before mothers and fathers", and so on. The association between *obong'aini* and initiation is such that Gusii deny the possession of *obong'aini* to uncircumcised adults (such as Luo or Europeans), as well as to their own uncircumcised children.

<sup>2</sup> p. 38 above.

I consulted the Fynneys as to how Christina should be compensated for her weeks of daily attendance on me, and acting on their advice, paid her for her time, on the basis of the value placed on women's services, in Zululand—a few pounds. As this was my second trip there as a writer, there was no question about my publishing the story, and never were any assurances given to her, or any one else, to the contrary.

Despite his neglect and cruelty, Christina loved Solomon, and the emotional conflict within her was very real to me. My concern was penetrating below the surface, to try to present and understand conflicting standards, modern versus traditional, Christian versus pagan. It was soon obvious to me that Christina and the other wives suffered bitterly within the framework of their own society. That was my reason for introducing native custom, to recreate their own background.

The reviewer's comment on the theme of the book, a woman's rebellion against polygamy, is illuminating, he refers to previous more fortunate rulers! Their "*izigodlo* . . . were uncontaminated by foreign outlooks . . ."

Quarreling with my statement that Solomon was a familiar figure to the mining industry, and that large dances were held in his honour, he quotes in rebuttal a '43 Report to show that Zulus are only six per cent of the labour employed. Solomon died in '33, and it was ten years before that that he was in his prime, when there were a larger number of Zulus at the mines. Nor did I suggest that only Zulus danced for him. A parade of loyalty for the Zulu Chief was considered desirable because of the effect it created on all natives. The files of Johannesburg newspapers will substantiate Solomon's many visits.

It takes more than a casual few, extraneous statistics to refute that fact.

Christina told me of the horrible experience of giving birth to a child with a caul, that the women in attendance feared it, called it an animal. The reviewer flatly contradicts that, and gives as his authority a study, *The Luck-Caul in Europe*, in which it is apparently stated that Zulus regard such a baby as a potential genius!

"One suspects falsehoods which border on libel", says Mr. Sikakana, and I commend that phrase as a summing up of his own attitude and method. It is an effort to demolish a book which he hopes to expunge from Zulu history because it etches in a portrait of a drunken, debauched, debased ruler controlling the destinies of a large number of people, in intimate relation with dozens of helpless women, as it has, "greatly irritated Zulu sensibilities . . . because they involve the respected members of their royal families."

My primary interest is in the status of women, their development and struggle for freedom. Reduced to its simplest terms a woman's basic rights are those vested in the control of her own person. The degree to which a polygamist respects, or degrades the person of his wives, and the women attached to him, can sometimes be demonstrated only in the manner in which he disregards the decencies imposed by his own society. Some of Solomon's habits illustrated this, and these I deliberately included.

That rapid industrialization will in a generation, or two, automatically wipe out most polygamous marriages in Zululand, I well know. My book was an effort to present life under polygamy as one woman and others lived it, as the woman herself related it.

REBECCA REYHER.

## BOOKS IN REVIEW

### **The Lineage Principle in Gusii Society.**

PHILIP MAYER. (Oxford University Press, for the International African Institute, Memorandum XXIV, London: 1949.) 35 pp. 3/-.

This pamphlet constitutes a preliminary essay based on material gathered by the author during a first spell in the field as Kenya Government Sociologist. Dr. Mayer's intention, at some future date, is to present the final results of his research in a monograph on "Descent and Neighbourhood in Gusii Society".

The Bantu-speaking Gusii<sup>1</sup> live in mountainous country in the South Nyanza District of Kenya. In 1948 the Gusii numbered some 200,000 souls.

It is a society without indigenous central authorities and the author deals with kinship in all its ramifications and the significance of the lineage principle in sustaining the social equilibrium and resolving the conflict of allegiances. The Gusii ideal, he decides, is complete coincidence between the two focuses of loyalty—lineage group and local group—and recognizable mechanisms help to maintain the ostensible territorial integrity of lineages of all orders.

His investigations would appear to be following along the lines of Fortes as set out in *The Web of Kinship among the Tallensi*, but further comment is withheld pending the presentation of the promised forthcoming monograph which should provide valuable new material for comparative research.

L. L.

### **Gusii Bridewealth Law and Custom.**

Rhodes-Livingstone Papers No. 18. P. MAYER. (Oxford University Press, Cape Town: 1950.) v+67 pp. 6/6.

Dr. Mayer, sociologist to the Kenya Government did field work among the Gusii of Southern Kavirondo in 1946-47 and this brochure deals with part of his field material.

Among these people there is a division of labour based on sex and occupation. Agriculture is a woman's job, cattle the concern of the men. Certain cattle customs are disappearing as a result of Government measures, thus the bachelor cattle villages were suppressed in 1920. Wives are "lobolaed" with cattle, and cattle is a measure of wealth. The monograph deals with bride-wealth as Dr. Mayer calls it, though the only invariable aspect of *lobolo* transactions is that it transfers the status of the children born of the woman from her family to her husband's family. It has nothing to do with marriage. Dr. Mayer realizes this and ultimately says so but what is one to make of the following two statements. "The cattle transfer which legitimizes the union of a man and a woman is in Gussii custom conducted by the fathers of the two parties." (p. 6) A statement with which I entirely disagree.

The above statement should now be compared with the following with which I agree. "The living together of man and wife, and their sharing of the daily routine of the homestead, is regarded as a desirable and natural consequence of marriage, but the bridewealth system as such does nothing to secure it. It is the subsequent *enyangi* ceremony—not the bridewealth mechanism—that provides the specific overt sanctions against desertion or adultery on the wife's part. What the bridewealth mechanism as such is mainly designed to protect is not an exclusive right to that woman's society nor even to her sexual enjoyment, but the exclusive right over her offspring." (p. 57) So far from the *lobolo* legalizing the marriage it has nothing whatever to do with it. The *lobolo* purchases the status of the children, or put more shortly *lobolo* is not the bridewealth but the child-price. The marriage ceremony is one thing and decides whether adultery is possible or impossible, the *lobolo* is another thing and decides the status of the woman's children.

<sup>1</sup> Called *Kisii* by Europeans in Kenya.



The Gusii tribe is chiefless and hence politically unorganized but Dr. Mayer brightly talks of "bridewealth law, family law and the law of inheritance". (p. 4) Law is never defined. Some day anthropologists will wake up to the fact that such looseness of expression leads only to chaos and confusion. Law comes with the coming of the kings, no kings, no law is a good working hypothesis. Dr. Mayer states, "traditional Gusii society was chiefless. The internal organization of society depended far less on the presence of authorities than on the integrative effect of lineage bonds. . . . Gusii lineage was without any regular head or leader." (p.3) Here is one of those societies which both Radcliffe-Brown and Evans-Pritchard, with whom I am in agreement, describe as being without law. The social structure or the social organization, or both, bring pressure to bear on, or enforce sanctions against, those who traverse habitual behaviour or custom and thus restore the "euphoria."

If the monograph had been written with the recognition that such societies do not have law and if as a consequence all reference to law and legalities had been avoided one would have had a much clearer picture of the social structure, the social organization, the sanctions enforceable and how they are enforced.

Otherwise the monograph is a good study of the function of *lobolo* and of *lobolo* cattle and the customs connected therewith.

The general principles remain remarkably uniform throughout societies that use the *lobolo* system in settling the status of the children.

Dr. Mayer does make it clear, in spite of himself, that, among the Gusii, marriage is one institution and *lobolo* another. As in all similar instances there are other beasts, added to the hard *lobolo* core, that are customary payments. Both the levirate and the sororate exist. In the case of divorce the woman's family—not her new husband's family—have to refund the *lobolo* cattle.

The monograph is a good study of the implications that flow from, and the rules that govern, marriage and the payment of *lobolo* among the Gusii.

M. D. W. JEFFREYS.

**Venda Law.** Ethnological Publications No. 23 of the Department of Native Affairs. N. J. VAN WARMELO, in collaboration with W. M. D. PHOPHI (Government Printer, Pretoria: 1948-49.) 4 vols. 1047 pp. illus. 14/-, 12/6, 16/- and 24/- respectively.

We are again indebted to Dr. van Warmelo for his industry in preparing these volumes. Throughout they consist of Venda text on one page and the English translation on the opposing page. The author of the Venda text is Mr. W. M. D. Phophi. Under the general heading of "Venda Law" the four volumes are divided into: Part I "Betrothal, Thakha, wedding"; Part II "Married Life"; Part III "Divorce"; and Part IV "Inheritance".

Here is a mine of information on indigenous "Native law" covering these crucial aspects of Venda life. The pages teem with practical illustrations of every type of situation concerned in these legal problems; and these volumes are of great value, not only to the student of law among the Venda, but to the Student of "Native law" generally. Apart from this they are valuable to the student of Social Anthropology, and supply much raw material for comparative research. The value of the Venda textual material cannot be over-estimated. Apart from their anthropological value, the texts will provide students of the language with much in pure idiomatic vernacular, a welcome addition to the yet small literature of Venda. The fact, too, that it is accompanied by the English translation enhances its applicability to the learner of the language.

The author gives an introduction, in which he confesses to his attachment to the Venda people and language. He cannot refrain from writing "of their beautiful language *Tshivenda*, in many respects one of the most remarkable specimens of a Bantu language known". We all are liable to feel like that of our own particular Bantu language: dos Santos said of Karanga that it was "the most polished language I have seen in this Ethiopia"; and I myself wrote of Lamba (back in 1922) as "one of the purest and most primitive of all extant Bantu dialects"! The wonderful thing

about Bantu languages is that each has some striking philological and linguistic contribution to make, and that each one has the power of capturing the hearts of those who study it.

Dr. van Warmelo makes a strong plea for the necessity of using the language when studying the law; just as the student of Roman law needs Latin, so does the student of Venda law need Venda. He points out, in discussing the principles of Venda law that more stress is laid on the obligations of the individual than on his rights. The law of the small tribe "consisted of the old and tried methods tested many a time by his ancestors and found efficacious in upholding the social order, resolving strains, restoring good feeling and normality". In pointing out that "the smaller the tribe, the more catastrophic even minor squabbles could become", Dr. van Warmelo emphasized that "in the study of primitive law, to a greater or lesser extent, every divorce, every quarrel, every dispute about property which comes before a tribal court is not a suit at law at all, but a national crisis".

These volumes are well illustrated, and may be obtained from the Government Printer, Pretoria.

C. M. D.

**The Blessed Missionaries.** EDWIN W. SMITH.  
(Oxford University Press: 1950) 146 pp. 10/6.

This welcome publication embodies the Phelps-Stokes Lectures delivered by Dr. Smith in Cape Town in 1949. In his introduction, the author shows himself to be a bold protagonist of "partnership" in contrast to "baaskap", as a solution to our racial troubles. "On what terms are the components of this united nation to live?" he writes. "As regard the underprivileged groups, what are their rights and their status, economic, social and political, in the society of which they are to form an integral part? Is the white minority always to dominate the black and coloured majority? Has the future nothing better in store for South Africa than a racial-caste society, in which one group alone qualifies for the privilege of full citizenship and all other groups are disqualified

on the ground of their colour and presumed inferiority? or should we not rather envisage, and strive to build, a community in which the members, knowing themselves to be mutually inter-dependent and acknowledging the obligations of their common humanity, and respecting each other's personality, live and work together in friendly co-operation for the highest good of all?"

These lectures constitute a high testimonial to the great part played by missionaries in the opening up of Africa and in the uplift of the Africans. Linguistic, anthropological, religious, social and even political aspects of this great contribution are well dealt with. In this, the author himself, missionary, linguist, Bible translator, anthropologist and voluminous writer, played a most conspicuous part, though one would not learn that from his book: his praise and commendation are always for others.

Dr. Smith does not avoid discussing the thorny problems of race relations, and boldly faces those points on which the churches are not consistent with their Master's teaching and example. He gives full consideration to the separate Churches which exist in South Africa, divided on racial lines, and puts forward reasons both for and against the present position. The book contains much valuable historical material, and will prove to be an eye-opener to many a lay reader on matters that lie behind our present racial tangle. It is warmly recommended.

C. M. D.

**Die Christliche Terminologie als Missionsmethodologisches Problem. Dargestellt am Swahili und an anderen Bantusprachen.**  
P. WALBERT BUHLMANN. Supplement I der *Neuen Zeitschrift für Missions Wissenschaft*. (Schöneck-Beckenried, Schweiz: 1950) xxv + 418 pp.

This book is divided into three main parts: the first is called "Richtlinien" (Guiding Lines, pp. 20-110), the second, "Der Tatbestand im Swahili und anderen Sprachen" (The Linguistic Facts in Swahili and other Bantu Languages, pp. 111-374),



and the third part, "Zusammenfassung und Beurteilung" (pp. 375-401), consists of a summary and a critical examination of the present stage of the subject and the future Catholic missionary terminology in Swahili.

The first part of this book is an excellent example of a comparative linguistic investigation concerned with the very difficult, but important problem of adapting words of (native) vernaculars of still, or formerly, illiterate peoples to the highly developed terminology of European philosophy, psychology and especially theology. This part of the book falls, therefore, directly within the scope of reviews given in this periodical with regard to the general problem of rendering European terms in vernacular ones.

The second part is no less interesting and instructive for philologists, ethnologists and scholars of the comparative study of religions so far as they can observe the limitations which are drawn by a Catholic scholar over the interpretation of such vernacular terms which, correctly speaking, are the actual equivalents for the Roman Catholic ones, because the Roman Catholic terminology had adopted them in former times from popular or primitive thought. These can be best recognized in terms as transformation, resurrection, miracles and even, sin. No blame should therefore attach to the author, since he is committed to his dogma. One can clearly observe how difficult sometimes it is for the author to maintain the superiority of the Catholic term against its vernacular equivalent, especially with regard to those just enumerated (comp. also p. 321). Although the author stresses the doctrine of the so-called "primeval revelation", he sometimes feels obliged to take refuge in the decision of an ecclesiastical council to avoid the admission that the notion of Roman Catholic terminology and that of the vernacular are products of the same form of thinking.

The reviewer is, of course, fully in agreement with the author who stresses the general fact that the difference between the meaning of two words which belong to different languages is the greater, the more the cultural stages of the two respective peoples differ, although the two words may seem to be of the same meaning at first

sight. This general rule has also its reasonable limitation as the opposite one that in the languages of the higher developed cultures there may be no such terms which are convergent or identical with pre-scientific ones. And again, all that the author says about the problem of the meaning of words, namely that the linguist has to be at the same time an ethnologist, and that the language of a given people without knowledge of the mode of its life sometimes offers unsolvable problems (comp. p. 113), is quite right, but the author proves practically at the same time that to take refuge in such cases in the dogma of the superiority of an ecclesiastical doctrine means withdrawing the ethnological recognitions.

Nevertheless, within the limits of his ecclesiastical dogma the author discusses the difficult problem of meaning, or the semasiologic problem, with impressive and representative methods, and gives, in the second part of his book, instructive criticism with regard to the degree, which is already attained in rendering hundreds of terms of the Roman Catholic doctrine in Swahili and other Bantu languages. To many of the native concepts, such as soul, world, high gods, the reviewer could add some further notes which he has collected during his ethnological research work among the Nyakyusa of the Tanganyika Territory, but he will confine his review only to the *principal* problems which are discussed in the author's book. With respect to that, it must still be stressed that the author examines very exactly and in a highly instructive way such problems as the function of the "foreign word" (*fremdwort*), and the development of a number of genuine vernacular (Swahili) words (*Erbwörter*, traditional words) as to their adaptability as bearers of other, more highly developed concepts, such as is represented by the missionary terminology of the Roman Catholic Church. He deals also with the formation of new words from Swahili and in general (pp. 52-105). Here the results of the formal investigation of language development are of the highest value (p. 102f.) whilst he, on the other hand, states, that the study of the formal characters of a given language alone is not sufficient to solve the semasiological problem.



In connexion with this fact, I should like to express my appreciation of the author's scientific objectivity in, perhaps, a more personal matter. He is one of the few who have really studied (and not only quoted) and also understood my publications concerning the Austronesian terms of *mana* and *tabu*, and given a short, but correct judgement on them. He has, however, overlooked another of my publications concerning *mana*, namely my contribution to the anniversary publication of the sixtieth birthday of prof. Dr. Otto Reche (in *Kultur und Rasse*, München: 1939, pp. 375-85), a treatise which contains four general methodological views on the examination of the semasiological problem specially of the term *mana*. These views may be compared with "the three stages of the investigation of single notions", which the author discusses on p. 113f.: 1. to go thoroughly into the historic sources; 2. to elucidate the words from linguistic and ethnologic views; 3. to prove the effect of the words with regard to the practical aim for which they are used.

This review does not, I fear, reflect the real richness of thought and material in the author's book which can be appreciated by any appreciative reader concerned with semasiological problems, even though he did not share the author's dogmatic viewpoint. The book as a whole is a proof for the fact that without semasiological consciousness no scientific work can be done.

F. R. LEHMANN.

**Fitting Man to his Environment.** Thirty-first Earl Grey Memorial Lecture. LE GROS CLARK, W. E. (Newcastle upon Tyne: 1949) 27 pp. 1/-.

This lecture by one of Great Britain's leading anatomists discusses the adaptability of man to his environment. Now man has at least two environments the geo-physical and the cultural. Le Gros Clark is also hinting that another, the mechanical is approaching. He shows that no other animal has been able to adjust itself to all the regions and climates of this world. It is generally agreed that man evolved in a warm

climate which, in the opinion of the reviewer, supports the central Africa theory of man's origin. Thence he migrated into colder regions. The belief that the present ethnic-group modifications, namely that the dark skin of the Negro is a tropical modification and the light skin of the European, a temperate zone modification, is no longer held. I may add that this view is by no means new—Lopez writing in 1578 says "Signior Odovardo was of opinion that the black colour did not spring from the heat of the sun, but from the nature of the seed." (*Harean Collection of Voyages*. II. (London: 1745 (p. 530.)

The fact that man shows a remarkable lack of any conspicuous specializations has allowed him to retain an early fundamental plasticity that enables him to adjust his bodily needs to his physical requirements and as Le Gros Clark points out there is no evidence to suppose that this plasticity is greater or less in any of the human races.

Discussing whether environment has any physical effect on the human body Le Gros Clark overlooks the fact that the number of sweat glands per unit area of the skin is greater in the Negro than in the European and may thus point to man adapting himself either to a tropical environment by increasing the number of sweat glands, or to a cooler one by decreasing the number of sweat glands.

Le Gros Clark remarks that insufficient data is at present available to decide whether there is racial differentiation in susceptibility to diseases. Hooton in his book *Up from the Ape* mentions that sickle anemia appears to be a disease peculiar to Negroes, as also is ainhum.

The backwardness of many of the primitive societies can be traced to malnutrition, *vide* the studies of Wright, Fitzgerald Moore and Macculloch in Nigeria to mention no others. On this point Professor Le Gros Clark gives no opinion. The low productivity of the South African Bantu has been attributed to malnutrition and not to racial differences.

Klineberg in his book *Race Differences* and Ruth Benedict in her book *Race, Reason and Rubbish* establish the fact that no data exists to



date to show that mental ability is a function of race, a conclusion supported by a panel of leading scientists and sponsored by the United Nations. Professor Le Gros Clark is in agreement with this finding.

When Le Gros Clark turns to man's cultural environment one finds him concerned with antiquated views. He refers to the now discredited Functionalist School of Malinowski, wherein it is held that "the function of any cultural feature of a society is ultimately determined by its relation to what are called the basic biological needs of the individual". I well recollect my asking Malinowski in 1928 on what basic biological need the destruction of twins by the Ibo was based and as, can be expected, received no satisfactory answer.

Le Gros Clark suggests that the social anthropologist has "been influenced by his national reluctance to permit the disappearance of primitive forms of society which provide him with the material for his comparative sociological studies". One wonders where he met such social anthropologists. Le Gros Clark then tells us how physical anatomists view the world. "We are in the habit of speaking of inherited traditions and beliefs, etc." Anatomists may think otherwise on subjects out of their domain but never do social anthropologists, whose motto is that all culture is learned behaviour, and is not inherited. He comes to the conclusions which Darwin had reached nearly a century ago that no human being is inherently incapable of adjusting himself to new cultures and conditions and stresses that owing to man's plasticity it does not require centuries to pass from savagery to civilization but that theoretically the transformation could be achieved in one generation. Social anthropologists lean rather to three generations.

Le Gros Clark points out however that to-day better results are being obtained not so much in training man to adapt himself to this machine age as by adapting the machine to the man, e.g. in economy of effort in manipulating a machine.

Le Gros Clark returns to his theme that it is the plasticity of man and the control of that plasticity or adaptability by his intellect that will ensure for man his survival. Only by making himself fit to fit his surroundings will he survive.

One wishes that this lecture had first been vetted by a social anthropologist.

M. D. W. JEFFREYS.

**The Discovery of Africa.** Occasional Papers of the Rhodes-Livingstone Museum, No. 7. E. H. LANE-POOLE (1950). 28 pp. 2/6.

This is a survey of the various maps dealing with Africa in the Rhodes-Livingstone Museum, starting with the Berlingherri and Ulm reproductions of Ptolemy's map (1478 and 1486 respectively). A vast amount of most interesting detail is contained in this survey, which includes reproductions of six of the maps. In all fifty-six maps are described and commented upon. There are interesting historical references to travellers and others including "Prester John". It is refreshing to read that the author favours a Solomonic connexion with Sofala, a much more rational explanation of the ancient mining activities in Southern Rhodesia and Zimbabwe origins than we have from those who proclaim them Bantu and date them back only about a thousand years.

On page 7 the author is out in his derivation of *Zimbabwe* which is a compound noun, either *dzimba* + (*ma*)*bge* (i.e. stone houses) or *zimba* + (*ma*)*bge* (i.e. large stone house); he has overlooked the essential element *imba* (house in his etymology. On page 12 the "popular" interpretation of *Monomotapa* as "lord of the mines" is most probably the correct one, lit. *mwena* + *motapa* (i.e. owner of mine). This is supported from the writings of Afonso de Albuquerque who records the plural as *Benamotapa*, and of de Barros who used both *Benomotapa* and *Monomotapa*.

C. M. D.